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Rabbinic Interpretations of Amos
by
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Chapter I

The Oral Law of Judaism

In view of the fact that the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos are based upon the Oral Law of Judaism, the uninitiated reader will probably want to know, what is this Oral Law? Why is it so designated? What literature does it include? What is its origin?

As in other faiths that profess to be based on divine revelation, so in Judaism an unwritten tradition had always gone side by side of the Written Law. This unwritten tradition served both to interpret Scripture and supplement it. George Foote Moore points out that "the existence of such a tradition in all ages is indubitable."¹ This may be derived from the fact that the details connected with the performance of many of the ceremonials, as well as with the observance of the civil and criminal laws, are constantly assumed in the Pentateuch. Consequently we are justified in concluding that in addition to the Written Law there always existed an unwritten law which helped to make the former more complete and more intelligible.

Moore points out that from the critical point of view the authority of the unwritten law was common consent or long established and uninterrupted usage.² From the traditional Jewish point of view the unwritten law formed an integral part of the divine revelation and on that account

1 Judaism, vol.1,p.251.

2 Ibid, p.253.

possessed the same degree of authority as the Written Law.

In Rabbinic writings the unwritten tradition is generally referred to as "Torah shebe-al peh" (The Oral Law), in contradistinction to "Torah she-biktab" (The Written Law). The Talmud tells us that Moses received the Law (both written and unwritten) from Sinai and handed it down to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly.¹ Thus the belief was held that an uninterrupted chain of tradition preserved the integrity of the unwritten law.

The Talmud relates that a heathen once asked the great sage Shammai how many Torahs Israel possesses. Shammai replied that there are two Torahs, the Written Law and the Oral Law.² The same question was put to R. Gamaliel by the Roman general Agnitus* to which the identical reply was given.³

The fact that Israel was given two Torahs is derived by the Rabbis from the Pentateuch itself. We read in Leviticus: "These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the Lord made between Him and the children of Israel in Mt. Sinai by the hand of Moses" (26.46). The "statutes" refers to the interpretations of the Written Law; the "ordinances" refers to the logical conclusions that may be derived from the Written Law; the "laws" (Toroth) implies that there were two "Laws" given, one in written form and the other orally; from the words "in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses" we infer that the Torah together with its traditional laws, deductions

¹ Aboth, I, 1.

² Shabbath, 31a.

* Probably a

corruption of Quintus or Quietus (Jastrow).

³ Sifre, 145a.

and interpretations were all given at Sinai through Moses.¹

The interpretations and deductions of the Rabbinic scholars were all believed to be implicit in the words of the Torah. Hence the familiar Rabbinic dictum that whatever a distinguished scholar will deduce from the law by means of Biblical exegesis has already been communicated to Moses on Mt. Sinai.² All that the Rabbis had to do was to draw forth from the text all the interpretations and deductions that are implicit in it and show how they may be derived from the Mosaic Law. This was done by means of well defined principles of exegesis which were themselves regarded as being of divine origin.

That Moses received an Oral Law at Mount Sinai to supplement and elucidate the Written Law is also deduced from Exod. 24.12. "And I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written that thou mayest teach them." The "tables of stone" refer to the ten commandments; the "law" refers to the Pentateuch; the "commandment" refers to the Mishnah*; "which I have written" refers to the books of the prophets and the Hagigrapha; "that thou mayest teach them" refers to the Gemara,** thus showing that all of these were given to Moses at Sinai.³

According to the Talmud, Abraham fulfilled all the precepts of the Oral Law as well as those of the Written Law. This is derived from the

¹ Sifra, 112b; Cf. Megillah, 19b.

² Jer. Hagigah, 76d; Jer. Megillah, 74d; Jer. Peah, 17a.

* The Mishnah is the collection of traditional laws that was compiled by R. Judah the Prince (c.200A.D.)

** The Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah (200-500A.D.)

³ Berakoth, 5a.

words, "Because that Abraham hearkened to My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My Laws" (Gen.26.5). My Laws refers to the Written Law and the Oral Law.¹

In addition to the numerous laws that have been deduced from the Biblical text by means of exegesis, the Talmud refers to a number of legal precepts that are said to be "Halakah le-Moshe mi-Sinai" (oral laws revealed to Moses on Sinai) and which have no basis whatever in the Written Law. Of these there are no less than forty-two in number.* When E.Akiba, who according to the Talmud expounded "heaps upon heaps of Halakoth** on every letter" of the Bible, was asked by a disciple whence he deduced a certain law, ^{he} replied that it was "Halakah le-Moshe mi Sinai," i.e., it was communicated to Moses by God and then transmitted orally from generation to generation.²

When the belief in an Oral Law was first held is unknown. From the traditional point of view this belief obviously goes back to the very days of Moses. Isaac Hirsch Weiss points out, however, that the earlier generations never made such a claim. Not a single one of the prophets, for example, makes any reference to the existence of an Oral Law. When the conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees, which centered around the validity and authority of the Pharisaic interpretation of Scripture, was at its height, no claim was made by the Pharisees that they were relying for their interpretations upon an Oral Law that was of Mosaic origin. Nor

1 Yoma, 28b.

* This is the figure given by I.H.Weis (See Dor Dor we-Dorshaw, vol.1, pp.72-74). According to M.Wielziner the number of these traditional laws is fifty-five (See Introduction to the Talmud, p.123).

** legal precepts.

2 Menahoth, 29b.

does Josephus mention that they laid claim to such an Oral Law.¹

From the very nature of the Written Law, however, it seems apparent that there must have been an oral law to interpret and supplement the written law which is usually presented very briefly and at times even unintelligibly. To give an illustration let us consider the precept which prohibits work on the Sabbath (Exod.20.8-11). In very general terms the Written Law states that one must not do "any manner of work" on the Sabbath day. The question inevitably arises, however, as to what constitutes work. Scattered in various parts of the Pentateuch only three types of work are specifically mentioned as being prohibited on the Sabbath. Obviously there must have been other forms of labor that were not permitted. This is attested by some of the prophets who mention certain forms of work that are not permissible on the Sabbath but of which there is ^{no} trace in the Pentateuch.² This would lead one to believe that there must have been a great many laws and customs that had long prevailed among the people and which were regarded as being of equal authority with those that are specifically mentioned in the Pentateuch but which had never been committed to writing. These oral laws were an expansion and interpretation of the written laws. They explained in minute detail exactly how the written law was to be fulfilled.

To give one more illustration let us consider the commandment that deals with the ritual of slaughtering. All that we can find in the Mosaic law pertaining to this ritual is the following: "Then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the Lord hath given thee, as I have

¹ Dor Dor we-Dorshaw, vol.1, pp.2-3.

² See Jer. 17.21-22; Amos 8.5; Neh.10.32.

commanded thee" (Deut.12.21). There is no description, however, as to the manner in which the animal is to be slaughtered. R.Judah the Prince, therefore, infers from this verse that God revealed to Moses orally all the laws connected with this ritual.¹

The Rabbis of the Talmud maintained that the words of the Torah are not limited to a single interpretation but may be given various interpretations. "Just like a plant the words of the Torah are fruitful and multiply."² Jeremiah said in the name of God, "Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (23.29)? Just as the hammer produces many sparks, so a Biblical verse may have various interpretations.³ The same truth is derived from the words, "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this" (Ps.62.12).⁴

One of the sages of the Talmud asks how it was possible for Moses to learn the entire Oral Law concerning which it has been said, "The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea" (Job 11.9), within such a brief period of time as forty days. He replies that God did not really teach Moses the entire Oral Law but only the principles of interpretation by which the Oral Law may be deduced from the Written Law.⁵

The Oral Law, broadly speaking, includes the works of the prophets (Joshua to Malachi) and the Hagiographa, the entire literature of the two Talmuds and Midrashim, as well as the Aramaic translations of the Bible, known as Targums. The

1 Hullin, 28a.

4 Ibid.

2 Hagigah, 3b.

5 Exod. R., 41.

3 Sanhedrin, 34a.

teachings of the prophets and of the Writings are referred to in Rabbinic literature as dibre kabbalah (words of tradition).¹ The prophets were among the first to transmit the Oral Law to succeeding generations. A number of new laws are derived from the books of the prophets.

Following the prophets the interpretation and expansion of the Written Law was carried on by the "Men of the Great Assembly." It is believed by some scholars that they were identical with the Soferim (Scribes). The epoch of the Scribes was inaugurated by Ezra and continued for several centuries to the period of the Maccabees (450-100 B.C.). The Scribes not only interpreted the Written Law but added numerous 'enactments' (takkanoth) and 'decrees' (gezeroth) in order to "build a fence around the Torah" and protect it from being violated. Moreover, the Talmud tells us that when the Torah had been forgotten by Israel, Ezra came up from Babylon and re-established it.² Among the ordinances and decrees attributed to the Scribes are the canonization of the Bible, the reading of the Law every Monday and Thursday morning in addition to Saturday, the fixing of the daily prayers and grace after meals.

An important link in the development of the Oral Law was the contribution made by the Zugoth or Pairs of scholars. The Talmud records five such Pairs extending over five generations (c.150-300 B.C.) These Pairs were the outstanding scholars of their day and the heads of the Sanhedrin (highest Jewish court). To them are attributed various haggadic (non-legal) and halakic (legal) statements as well as certain enactments and decrees.

1 See Rosh Hashonah, 7a; Sotah, 37a.

2 Sukkah, 20a.

The most celebrated of the five Pairs was the one which included the two distinguished scholars, Shammai and Hillel, who flourished at the time of King Herod. More Halakoth* are recorded in their name than from any other Pair. They are also the founders of the two great academies, Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel, which continued the work of their masters for several generations. Both Shammai and Hillel dedicated their lives to the proper understanding and interpretation of the Torah. Though they did not always see eye to eye in their interpretation of the Law, the Talmud, nevertheless, speaks of the interpretations of both of them as "the words of the living God."¹ Hillel was the first to draw up a definite list of hermeneutic rules by which the Written Law may be interpreted.

The religious teachers and interpreters of the Torah who followed the Pairs were known as Tannaim (teachers). The results of their creative genius in expounding the law and in making new statutes to meet the demands of the times, are contained in the literary work which is known as the Mishnah. The Tannaim flourished during the first two centuries of the Christian era (c.10-200), beginning with the schools of Shammai and Hillel and ending with R. Judah ha-Nasi (the patriarch), a descendant of Hillel. It was R. Judah who compiled and codified the Mishnah. Whether or not he also committed the Mishnah to writing is something on which modern scholars still disagree.

The age of the Tannaim extended over a period of five generations. It may be well to cite the names of some of the most noted Tannaim of each generation. They are: R. Gamaliel the Elder, R. Johanan b. Zaccai (first generation); R. Gamaliel II (of Jabne), R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanos, R. Eleazar b. Azaria (second generation); R. Tarphon, R. Ishmael, R. Akiba,

* Traditional laws.

1 Erubin, 13b.

R. Jose the Galilean (third generation); R. Meir, R. Judah b. Ilai, R. Simeon b. Jochai, R. Simeon b. Gamaliel (fourth generation); R. Nathan (the Babylonian), Symmachos, R. Judah ha-Nasi and R. Simeon b. Eleazar (fifth generation). This by no means exhausts the list of famous Tannaim. In addition to these we may mention the names of two distinguished scholars, R. Hiyya and R. Abba (Arega) who belonged to the sixth generation and who were regarded as semi-Tannaim. They together with others of their generation form a connecting link between the period of the Tannaim and that of the Amoraim which followed it.

The Mishnah, as it was codified by R. Judah, is divided into six Orders. Each Order consists of a number of tractates. The tractates are divided into chapters and each chapter consists of a number of individual Mishnayoth. In all, the Mishnah consists of sixty-three tractates. The six Orders of the Mishnah constitute the text book of the Oral Law and include laws that deal with all phases of the civil and religious life of the Jewish people. Waxman points out that R. Judah had a threefold purpose in compiling the Mishnah: (1) "To bring order and unity in the activity of the development of the Oral Law so that it should not deviate into strange paths; (2) to give the students a text which should serve them as a guide in their studies; and (3) that it should become a code of laws in accordance with which the teachers shall be able to render decisions in practical cases."¹

For various reasons, however, R. Judah did not include in his collection all the Halakoth that were floating about orally among the scholars of the various schools. Many of these Halakoth were later compiled in a separate collection known as Tosefta (additions). Much of the material contained in the Tosefta is also to be found in the Mishnah, only in a briefer form.

¹ A History of Jewish Literature, vol. 1, p. 70.

The Tosefta is divided into the same six Orders as the Mishnah and, like the Mishnah, is also sub-divided into tractates and chapters. It is generally believed among scholars that the Tosefta was compiled by R. Hiyya and R. Hoahayah (third century). The final form of the Tosefta, however, probably did not take shape until the close of the Talmud (c.500), for it contains many later additions.

But even the Tosefta does not include all the Halakoth that were left out of the Mishnah. There are hundreds of additional Halakoth that are not contained in any separate collection, but which are to be found scattered throughout the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. These Halakoth are referred to in the Talmud as Baraitoth (Baraita in the singular form) which means external. Though the Halakoth contained in the Tosefta and in the Baraita may, from one point of view, be regarded as extra-canonical inasmuch as they were not included in the Mishnah of R. Judah, they nevertheless are quoted in the Talmud with practically the same degree of authority as the laws of the Mishnah.

Though the Mishnah and the Tosefta are essentially the depositories of the traditional laws of Judaism, it is a mistake to think that the material contained in them is exclusively of a legal character. It is true that by far the greater part of this literature is of a legal nature. There is, however, a considerable portion of the material which is essentially non-legal and rather of a narrative and ethical character.

There are really two distinct currents running through the stream of Rabbinic literature. One of these is the legal and the other is the narrative or non-legal. This is especially true of the Gemara which is

a commentary on the Mishnah and which we shall discuss a little later.

It is worth noting that one of the tractates of the Mishnah is entirely non-legal. It is generally referred to as "The Ethics of the Fathers," and, as the title implies, deals mainly with ethical teachings. The legal portions of the Rabbinic literature are known as Halakah while the non-legal sections are referred ^{to} as Haggadah. More will be told later about the general character and the various types of Haggadah.

It has already been suggested that the style of the Mishnah is extremely brief and terse. Much of its material is, therefore, obscure and in need of further clarification. After ~~the~~ the Mishnah was compiled, there, therefore, sprang up hundreds of scholars who devoted themselves religiously and wholeheartedly to the interpretation and elucidation of the laws of the Mishnah. These scholars flourished from 220-500A.D. and are known as Amoraim (Speakers or Interpreters).

The following are among the most famous Amoraim of each generation:

(1) R.Johanan, R.Simeon b.Lakish, Abba Areca (called simply Rab), (Mar) Samuel; (2) R.Ame, R.Assi, R.Zeira, R.Huna, R.Hisda, R.Shesheth; (3) Rabba bar Huna, Abaye, Raba, R.Papa; (4) R.Ashe, R.Zebid, R.Kahana, Mar Zutra; (5) R.Ido bar Abin, Mar bar R.Ashe, R.Acha of Difte; (6) R.Thospia, Rabina and R.Jose. In all the Talmud mentions the names of several hundred Amoraim. The Amoraim did not have the authority to dispute any Halakah that was accepted in the Mishnah, Tosefta or Baraitha. Their principal task was to expound the Mishnah.

The collection of the interpretations and discussions of the Amoraim is known as Gemara (learning). The Mishnah together with the Gemara constitute the Talmud. In a narrower sense the Talmud refers to the Gemara alone. The

Gemara obviously contains far more matter than the Mishnah for there are generally many pages of discussion on but a few lines of the Mishnah.

It is not a simple matter to describe the nature of the Talmud to those who are unfamiliar with the original text. As Graetz points out, the Talmud is quite different from "any other literary production."¹ Not only is its material extremely vast but, judging by modern standards, without system or order. Instead of dealing with a subject fully in one passage, the same subject is often dealt with in any number of passages in the various tractates of the Talmud.

Emanuel Deutch in his dissertation on "The Talmud" pictures how amazed the modern investigator would be at the first sight of the "luxuriant Talmudical wildernesses." Thus he says: "Schooled in the harmonizing, methodizing systems of the West--systems that condense, and arrange, and classify, and give everything its fitting place and its fitting position in that place--he feels almost stupefied here. The language, the style, the method, the very sequence of things, the amazingly varied nature of these things--everything seems tangled, confused, chaotic."² Solomon Schechter speaks of the Talmud as "a work too varied, too disconnected, and too divergent in its elements to be concisely defined at all."³ Though substantially a work that deals with matter of ^a legal character, it treats of a multitude of subjects that do not have the remotest connection with law. Frequently the interpretation and discussion of a Biblical verse may lead to comments and observations that bear no relevancy whatever to the verse under discussion. Thus it is not at all unusual for a student of the Talmud

¹ History of the Jews, vol.2,p.632.

² Deutch, The Talmud, p.24.

³ Studies in Judaism, vol.3,p.144.

to suddenly find himself absorbed in a discussion on theology, theosophy, medicine, or astrology. This is all due to the fact that in the course of the interpretation of a certain verse some casual remark may have been made which turned the discussion completely away from the text to these other subjects. It is these diversions that make up the haggadic part of the Talmud.

It should be clear to the reader that although the Talmud interprets the Pentateuch and the other books of the Bible it can hardly be said that the Talmud is a commentary on the Bible in the ordinary sense of the word. Certainly the Talmud does not comment on the Bible in a systematic way, verse by verse. The comment on one verse in the Bible may be found in one tractate of the Talmud while the comment on the next verse may be found in an entirely different tractate. The literature of the Talmud is extremely vast and the Biblical verses are scattered throughout this vast literature which has often been referred to as "the sea of the Talmud."

As in the case of the Mishnah, the Gemara, too, consists mainly of two elements, Halakah and Haggadah. The Halakah which deals with abstruse legal discussions is characterized by dialectical subtilities and hair-splitting argumentation. Very often the purpose of this mental gymnastics was not so much to arrive at the Halakah as "to increase the study of the Torah and strengthen it." As Waxman put it, "In oral discussion, all means were permissible, farfetched comparisons were brought, the bounds between Halakah and Haggadah were obliterated, and all faculties of the mind were brought into play. This quality of oral study might have jeopardized the logical order, the finished polish of a written work, but it added the flavor of

vividness, the freshness of repartee, the scintillating wit and humor of a face-to-face discussion."¹

The Haggadah of the Talmud is written in a much lighter vein than the Halakah and included many anecdotes, parables, legends and fables. Frequently the Haggadah consists of a delightful bit of narrative relating either an interesting episode in the life of a great Jewish personality or some fanciful legend pertaining to an important historical event in the life of the Jewish people. A considerable portion of the Haggadah deals with the future restoration of Israel, the punishment of Israel's enemies, the coming of the Messiah, etc. This haggadic material has always been a source of great comfort and hope to the Jewish people in their darkest moments of suffering and despair. To sum up the difference between the halakic and haggadic portions of the Talmud we may say that whereas the Halakah is generally heavy material which appeals mainly to the intellect the Haggadah is usually material of a lighter nature whose appeal is mainly to the heart.

We have seen that the Gemara is the collection of the commentaries and discussions of the Amoraim on the Mishnah. It should be noted, however, that there are really two Amoraic commentaries on the Mishnah, one that was composed by the Amoraim of Babylonia and the other by the Amoraim of Palestine. These developed respectively into the Babylonian Talmud and Palestinian Talmud. The Palestinian Talmud has Gemara for thirty-nine tractates,* whereas the Babylonian Talmud has Gemara for only thirty-six and a half. However,

¹ A History of Jewish Literature, vol.1,p.134.

* The Mishnah is divided into sixty-three tractates.

the Gemara of the Babylonian Talmud is far more voluminous because its discussions are considerably longer than those of the Palestinian Talmud.

The study of the Palestinian Talmud never assumed such proportions as that of the Babylonian Talmud. In fact many outstanding students of the Oral Law had only a cursory knowledge of the Palestinian Talmud; some did not even have that. According to Louis Ginzberg, R. Saadia Gaon appears to have been the only one of all the Geonim* who was well versed in it.¹ There are several factors that contributed to the comparative neglect of the Palestinian Talmud.

First, the Babylonian Talmud was regarded as more authoritative in matters of religious law. Secondly, the language and style of the Palestinian Talmud are more difficult than those of the Babylonian Talmud. Strange as it may appear, Hebrew is used more extensively in the Babylonian than in the Palestinian Talmud. Thirdly, the discussions in the Babylonian Talmud are livelier and possess more human interest than those in the Palestinian Talmud.

According to Abraham ibn Daud and Maimonides the Palestinian Talmud was redacted by R. Johanan (died in 279 A.D.).² This could hardly have been the case for we find sayings and discussions by scholars who lived considerably later. In the opinion of Strack the Palestinian Talmud assumed its present form, in all essentials, during the early part of the fifth century.³

* The Talmudic scholars who lived between the seventh and eleventh centuries were called "Gaon" (Excellency).

1 A commentary on the Palestinian Talmud, vol.1, XLV.

2 H.L. Strack, Intro. to the Talmud and Midrash, p.65.

3 Ibid.

As for the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud, this was begun by Rab Ashi (died in 427) and completed by Rabina (died in 499). In the year 500 the Babylonian Talmud was declared officially closed by R. Jose. According to Schechter Rab Ashi merely began to collect the oral material but he doubts whether he ever began to commit it to writing. In the opinion of both Weiss and Schechter the form in which we now have the Talmud was not completed until the end of the eighth century.

We thus see that the Oral Law was transmitted orally from generation to generation for many centuries before it was finally reduced to writing. It was not by accident that it was not written down sooner but because of a prohibition against committing the Oral Law to writing. R. Abba makes the statement in the name of R. Johanan that "he who writes down Halakoth is as one who commits the Torah to flames."¹ In the school of R. Ishmael the prohibition against reducing the Oral Law to writing is derived as follows: "And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Write thou these words'" (Exod. 34.27) -- these words you shall write but you shall not write Halakoth.² R. Judah expounds: "Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words" (ibid) -- what has been said in writing may not be said orally and what has been said orally may not be said in writing.³ Some scholars maintain that this interdict applied only to the Halakah while others believe that it also applied to the Haggadah. It is generally believed among scholars, however, that the prohibition never had the binding quality of law for we find that it was frequently disregarded, not only in cases of haggadic works which we know to have existed but even in cases of Halaka, as for example, the Megillat Ta'anith, a work which lists the days of the

1 Temura, 14b.

2 Gittin, 60b; Temura, ibid.

3 Ibid.

year on which fasting is prohibited.

The prohibition against writing down Halakoth was not intended to apply to scholars, who frequently wrote down Halakoth for their personal use, but to the writing down of them for general use of the public. Originally this was not permitted for fear that the Oral Law would then become 'but and dried' and would no longer possess the flexibility that it had when it was retained orally by the great masters of the law. As long as the Halakah remained unwritten, the judges would be able by means of interpretation, to adapt it to varying conditions and circumstances. Once it is written down, however, it necessarily becomes fixed and unadaptable to changing conditions. Subsequently the Oral Law was not written down so that it would remain the exclusive possession of Israel and not be exposed to the danger of being appropriated by other nations as was the case with the Written Law, and as a result of which Israel would become no different from other nations.¹

As far back as the days of Shammai and Hillel the Oral Law and Written Law were already regarded as equally binding and authoritative. When a certain heathen came to Shammai and asked him to proselytize him to Judaism on the condition that he teach him only the Written Law because he was skeptical as to the validity of the Oral Law, Shammai rebuked him and sent him forth. When he later came to Hillel with the same request, the latter accepted him and began to teach him the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The next day he taught him the letters differently. When the proselyte called this to the attention of Hillel the latter replied, "You

1 Tanhuma, Ki-Tissa, ed.Sub., pp.58b-59a Cf. Exod. R.,47.

relied upon me yesterday for instruction in the Hebrew letters, why not rely upon me also for instruction in the Oral Law?¹

The basis for this authoritative character of the Oral Law may be traced to the passage in Deuteronomy, "According to the Law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do" (17.11).^{*} Because this authority of the Oral Law was not accepted by the Sadducees, the Pharisees had to go out of their way to stress its importance and binding character. R.Johanan went so far as to say that the covenant which God had established with Israel was made only on the condition that she accept the Oral Law.²

Thus far we have only dealt with that branch of the Oral Law which belongs to the Literature of the Talmud. This we have found to include the compilation of legal propositions of R.Judah the Prince which is known as the Mishnah, the additional collection of Halakoth known as the Tosefta, the 'extraneous' Halakoth not included in the Mishnah or Tosefta known as the Baraita, the Babylonian and Palestinian commentaries on the Mishnah known as the Gemara.

In addition to the literature of the Talmud, there is, however, another vast body of literature which is an integral part of the Oral Law and which is known by the general term Midrash. The word Midrash is a derivation of the Hebrew word darash, 'to search' or 'expound'. The reference is, of course, to the searching and expounding of the Torah around which the entire spiritual activity of the Jews had centered since

1 Shabbath, 31a.

2 Gittin, 60b.

* The correct interpretation of the Law is thus left in the hands of the scholars of each generation.

the days of Ezra. This process of searching the Scriptures with a view to finding out its inner meaning was greatly intensified after the collapse of the Jewish State (70 A.D.). With political independence gone, the Temple razed to the ground, all sacred possessions associated with the Temple destroyed, the only spiritual treasure that remained intact and which proved indestructible was the Torah. Is it any wonder then that this sole remnant of Israel's spiritual possessions became the all important thing in her tragic and checkered history? There it was that she sought solace, spiritual uplifting and hope for future restoration. There, too, she sought guidance in every phase of her life, both material and spiritual. It was her firm conviction that the Torah is the revealed word of God and that it was meant to present a way of life for the Jews of all generations. When it was found that the Written Law did not adequately meet the new conditions that had arisen, adjustments were made partly by the enactment of new ordinances and partly by Midrash (exposition).

The essential difference between the literature of the Talmud and that of the Midrash is that whereas the former is preponderantly halakic, the latter is chiefly haggadic. That does not mean to say that there is no Haggadah in the Talmud or Halakah in the literature of the Midrash. We have already noted that there are considerable portions of haggadic material in the Talmud. Substantially, however, it is not amiss to say that the Talmud is a book (or a work) that deals with the discussion of legal data. Whatever haggadic material it contains appears to have been introduced with a view to giving the student some diversion and mental

relaxation after having taxed his intellect with hair-splitting and deeply involved legal argumentation that often extended over a period of many hours.

With the literature of the Midrash the situation is entirely different. Excluding the "tannaitic" Midrashim which are mainly halakic, the great bulk of the Midrashic literature, which reached its high water mark during the period of the Amoraim, is haggadic in content. The attitude of the Rabbis toward the Haggadah varied. While some were favorably inclined towards it, others had little use for it. Generally speaking the Palestinian Jews were more devoted to the Haggadah than those who lived in Babylonia. This is understandable. The Jews of Palestine were subjected to persecution and oppression during the early centuries of the Christian era and therefore found much consolation in the Haggadah. The Jews of Babylonia, on the other hand, enjoyed comparative peace and quiet and did not feel as great a need for the soothing and comforting words of the Haggadah. This explains also why most of the Midrashic literature was compiled in Palestine and not in Babylonia though the material contained in the Midrashim was composed by Babylonian and Palestinian scholars alike.

And now for a consideration of the character of the Midrashim. What is the nature of ^{their} literature? When were they compiled, etc? It should be stated at the outset that there are two kinds of Midrash: Midrash Halakah and Midrash Haggadah. We have already seen that the 'tannaitic' Midrashim, which are the oldest, are mainly halakic. They include the Mekilta (measure) of R. Ishmael and fragments of the Mekilta of R. Simeon

ben Johai on Exodus, the Sifra (book) or Torath Kohanim on Leviticus, the Sifre (books) on Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the Sifre Zuta (small Sifre) on Numbers. The authors of the sayings contained in these works are nearly all Tannaim, but the final compilers were Amoraim.

O. Tchernowitz takes pains to point out that the style and primary aim of the Halakic Midrash is quite distinct from that of the Halakah in the Mishnah, that whereas the principal aim of the Midrash is to interpret the Biblical verse without concern as to the 'Halakah le-ma'ase' (traditional law for actual practice), the primary aim of the Mishnah is to present the Halakah le-ma'ase.¹ Some of the halakic Midrashim contain considerable haggadic matter, others very little. D. Hoffman points out that there are two tendencies discernible in the 'tannaitic' Midrashim, one the product of the school of R. Akiba, and the other the product of the school of R. Ishmael.² More will be said in the next chapter concerning the different methods of interpretation that were employed by these two famous schools.

The chief purpose of the ^{halakic} Midrash was two fold: (1) to deduce new Halakoth from the Written Law, (2) to find Biblical authority for the old Halakoth. We cannot always tell whether the Halakah preceded the Midrash or vice versa. S. Schechter is of the opinion that where the Rabbinic interpretation is forced and far-fetched, it is safe to assume that "the Halakah was first handed down by tradition as an ancient usage and custom, and the Biblical 'support' was invoked only to give it the weight of

1 Toldoth ha-Halakah, pp.51-53.
Midraschim, pp.5-6.

2 Zur Einleitung in die halachischen

Scripture authority."¹ This Biblical 'support' is generally referred to in Rabbinic literature as an "Asmahta."

The Midrash Haggadah which constitutes by far the greater part of the Midrashic literature may be classified into five groups: 1) Historical, 2) Homiletic, 3) Exegetical, 4) Ethical, 5) Mystical. The history of the Haggadah extends over a period of nearly fifteen hundred years (500B.C. -975A.D.). The creative midrashic activity, however, did not continue long after the close of the Babylonian Talmud. From then on the material which had already been extant either orally or in written form was assembled in various collections. This period of assembling lasted until the eleventh or twelfth century. Much of the Haggadah remained in oral form for many centuries. It will be recalled that according to some scholars the interdiction against committing the Oral Law to writing applied not only to the Halakah but to the Haggadah as well. We know, however, that there were haggadic books in existence since the early part of the third century, though those that have come down to us are from later times. The older elements of the 'tannaitic' Midrashim go back to the second century but, as we have already seen, these are mainly halakic and not haggadic.

The historical Haggadah consists of a great deal of fanciful and legendary material that grew up around some of the heroes of the Bible and around some of the outstanding events in Jewish history. Much of this type of Haggadah is to be found in the Talmud and in the large haggadic collections. Much of it has even come down to us from the

1 Studies in Judaism, vol.3,p.212.

Apocalyptic literature. The Talmud mentions the Megillath Yuhasin (Roll of Genealogy) which contained haggadic material on various outstanding personalities. Of this type of Haggadah the following are among the Midrashim that have come down to us: Megillath Ta'anith (The Roll of Fasts) which belongs to the 'tannaitic' period,* Seder Olam (Order of the World) which has been ascribed to a disciple of R. Akiba (2nd century), Pirke R. Eliezer, and Sefer ha-Yashar.

The greater part of the Midrashic literature consists of homiletic Haggadah. The purpose of this type of Haggadah was to inculcate religious faith, extol the glory of God and of Israel, strengthen the devotion of Israel to the Torah and, finally, to build character. The homiletic Midrashim do not comment on the Biblical text verse by verse but merely select certain individual texts on which they base their homilies. Frequently the preacher or teacher would give the same verse first a halakic interpretation and then a homiletic one. The Talmud relates that R. Ami and R. Asi were sitting in the presence of R. Isaac. One of them asked him to expound some Halakah and the other desired Haggadah. When he began to expound Haggadah the one who asked for Halakah interrupted; when he began to expound some Halakah the one who wanted Haggadah interrupted. Finally, R. Isaac said to them, "This reminds me of a parable. A man once had two wives, one of them was young and the other old. The young wife wishing her husband to look youthful plucked out his gray hair; the old wife wishing him to look old plucked out his black hair. Before very long the poor man found himself to be completely bald." R. Isaac then proceeded to interpret a verse in which he introduced both Halakah and Haggadah, thus

* Megillath Ta'anith is generally classed as an haggadic work though it contains a considerable amount of Halakah (See Weiss, Dor Dor we-Dorshaw, vol. 2, p. 255).

satisfying them both.¹

Among the oldest and most representative of the homiletic Midrashim are the following: Pesikta (de Rab Kahana), Leviticus Rabba, Deuteronomy Rabba, Tanhuma or Yelammedenu. Among the smaller and less known of the homiletic Midrashim are Aggadath Bereshith, Midrash Hashkem, Pesikta Hadatta and Midrash Wayekullu.

The exegetical Midrashim make their comments on the Biblical text according to the order of the verses. Interpretation of Biblical words and phrases may already be found in the Wisdom of Solomon, the Second Book of the Maccabees and in other literary productions of the pre-Hadrian era. But the real exegetical Haggadah in its full development begins with the period of the Tannaim. The oldest Midrashim which belong to this type of haggadic literature are Genesis Rabba and Midrash Ekah Rabbati (on Lamentations). According to Strack neither of these could have been compiled much later than the Palestinian Talmud (5th century).² Among the later exegetical Midrashim are those on the Megilloth known as the Rabboth (Scrolls of Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs), Midrash Samuel, Midrash Tehillim (on the Psalter) and Midrash Mishle (on the Book of Proverbs).

The ethical Haggadah takes on various forms and deals with a variety of subjects. It speaks of the relationship between man and God as well as of the relationship between man and man. It propounds a philosophy of life that is wholly permeated with religious sentiment and idealism. In-

1 Baba Kamra, 60b.

2 Intro. to the Talmud and Midrash, p. 218.

cluded in its literature is material on practical wisdom, spiritual values, metaphysics and etiquette. One whole tractate of the Mishnah is devoted to the ethical teachings of the Tannaim and is known as Pirke Aboth (The Sayings of the Fathers). Additional ethical teachings of the Fathers collected by R. Nathan were incorporated in the Tosefta known as Aboth de R. Nathan. The ethical Haggadah includes a great many fables parables and maxims which are scattered throughout the literature of the Talmud and Midrash. The Talmud relates that R. Meir had a collection of three hundred fables on the fox but that only three survived.¹ Among the better known ethical Midrashim are Derek Erez Rabba and Zuta, Tanna debe Eliyyahu and Midrash Temura.

The mystical literature of the Rabbis grew out of the conviction that the Scriptures must contain some hidden mysteries which are not manifest on the surface or in the plain meaning of the verse. The attempt was therefore made to unfold these mysteries from the words of the Bible. This was done by means of allegory and symbol. The earliest mystic speculations centered around the story of creation and the visions of Ezekiel. These are referred to in Rabbinic literature as Ma'aseh Bereshith (History of Creation) and Ma'aseh Merkabah (History of the Divine Chariot). The Talmud cautions against delving too deeply into this type of speculation quoting Ben Sira who said, "Thou shalt have no business with secret things" (Ecclus. 3.22).² Among the Midrashim that deal with this type of Haggadah are the Sefer Yezirah, Alphabet (or Othiyyoth) of R. Akiba,

1 Sanhedrin, 38b.

2 Hagigah, 13a.

Midrash Kenen, Midrash Tadshe, and the Book of Raziel.

In addition to the Midrashim already mentioned there are a number of collective works that go by the name of Midrash. The best known and perhaps most valuable of these Midrashim is the Yalkut Shim'oni, usually referred to simply as Yalkut. This Midrash was compiled during the thirteenth century from more than fifty works, several of which are now lost. Two other valuable collective works are the Yalkut ha-Makiri (14th century), and the Midrash ha-Gadol which was compiled in Yemen in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The latter Midrash is particularly valuable because of the excerpts that it contains from 'tannaitic' Midrashim which are no longer extant.

No treatise on the Oral Law would be complete without a word about the Targumim or Aramaic versions of the Bible. After the Jews returned from Babylon the Aramaic language was widely used among the common people. The need consequently arose for an Aramaic translation of the Bible. For many years the Bible was interpreted and expounded in the synagogues in the Aramaic language orally. The time came, however, when there appeared several translations of the Pentateuch into Aramaic in written form. These are known as (1) Targum Onkelos, (2) the Jerusalem Targum or pseudo-Jonathan, and (3) the fragmentary Jerusalem Targum. In addition to these there also appeared an Aramaic version of the books of the prophets and of most of the books of Hagiographa.

For the purposes of this thesis our main interest is in the Aramaic translation of the works of the prophets which has been ascribed by the Rabbis to Jonathan ben Uzziel, the most prominent disciple of Hillel

(1st century).¹ This version is really much more than a literal translation of the prophetic books. Frequently it serves as a valuable commentary in its interpretation of difficult verses. It paraphrases more freely than Targum Onkelos and does not follow the Hebrew text as closely. According to the Talmud the Targum to the Prophets was composed by Jonathan "from the mouths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," thus implying that it was based on traditions which were handed down by these prophets.² When Jonathan's Targum first made its appearance it evoked considerable disapproval on the part of the religious authorities who declared that the very land of Israel was shaken because of it and that a heavenly voice had cried out: "Who hath revealed my secrets to the children of men?" Tradition has it that Jonathan also wished to translate the Hagiographa but was restrained from doing so by a voice from heaven.³

It is not likely that the Targum in its present form was composed by Jonathan but it is perfectly possible that his translation served as the foundation for our present Targum to the Prophets. The Targum to the Prophets was composed in Palestine but by the third century it had already received general recognition in Babylonia from where it was carried to other countries where Jews lived. Jonathan's Targum is frequently quoted in the Babylonian Talmud by R. Joseph, head of the academy of Pumbedito, who says, with reference to two Biblical passages (Isa. 8.6 and Zech. 12.11): "If there were no Targum to it we should not know the meaning of these verses."⁴ We see from this that as early as the beginning of the 4th

1 Megillah, 3a.

3 Ibid.

Katan, 28b; Megillah, 3a.

2 Ibid.

4 Sanhedrin, 94b; Mo'ed

century the Targum to the Prophets was already recognized as of ancient authority. The Targum contains some halakic as well as haggadic elements and thus has a definite place in the Oral Law of Judaism.

It should be noted before we conclude this chapter that a knowledge of the Oral Law was not confined to the Jews of Palestine and Babylonia alone. Whilst it is true that the Halakah has its origin in Palestine and flourished mainly in Palestine and Babylonia, there is evidence to show that as early as the second century the Oral Law was already known and studied by the Jews of Alexandria. The Talmud relates that the men of Alexandria had asked twelve questions of R. Joshua b. Hananiah, who was a Tanna of the second century, and that three of them pertained to Halakah.¹ According to Lauterbach the Palestinian Halakah was probably introduced in Alexandria by Judah b. Tabai or Joshua b. Perahyah who had fled to Alexandria from the persecution of John Hyrcanus (2nd century B.C.).² Belkin in his recent book on "Philo and the Oral Law" advances the thesis that the Halakah of the great sage of Alexandria is based upon the Oral Law of Palestine as it was known in Alexandria. He points out that though the interpretations and expositions of Philo do not always coincide with those of the Tannaim, in most instances his views are in complete agreement with theirs. Certainly, he argues, Philo could not have been ignorant of the Oral Law of Palestine, as is maintained by Heinemann.

This brings to a close our presentation of the Oral Law as it developed over a period of nearly one thousand years. The Oral Law of Judaism

1 Middah, 69b.

2 "Philo Judaeus," The Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. X, p. 16.

represents the labors of the outstanding scholars in Israel who devoted all their mental and spiritual resources to the exposition and proper understanding of the Written Law. The task was to them a labor of joy. In the next chapter we shall deal with the principles of exegesis that the Rabbis employed in their interpretation of Scripture.

Chapter II

Hermeneutics of Rabbinic Literature

Hermeneutics may be defined as the science of interpretation according to certain specified rules. The term is most commonly applied to the exegesis or interpretation of Scripture. Though its root meaning is the same as that of exegesis, literary usage has made a difference between them. Whereas hermeneutics is the science which establishes the rules of interpretation, exegesis is the actual application of those rules.

Before proceeding with our study of the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos it will be well to examine the hermeneutic rules by which the Rabbis were guided in their interpretation of Scripture. It is a mistake to think that they had no such rules to guide them. Whilst it is true that the Rabbinic interpretations of biblical verses frequently deviate from their simple and literal meaning, they nevertheless were not made arbitrarily but according to well-defined and generally accepted hermeneutic principles.

The origin of these principles is unknown. In the Talmud we find no hint as to who their author might be. In the Responsa literature of the Gaonim, however, they are declared to be Halakah le-Moshe mi-Sinai (revealed to Moses at Sinai).¹ In this view also concurred some of the

1 Sefer Kerithoth, Section I, par. 9.

outstanding scholars of the Middle Ages including Rashi, Maimonides, and Nachmanides.

The Rabbis of the Talmud employed several methods in their interpretation of Scripture. The two principal ones are known as Peshat and Derash. By Peshat is meant the plain meaning of the biblical verse and its interpretation in strict accordance with the grammatical construction and spirit of the passage. Derash (from darash, to search, investigate), on the other hand, is a more artificial way of interpreting a passage. According to this method the plain and natural meaning of the verse is lost sight of and a homiletic or forced interpretation is substituted. The result of this method of interpretation is known as Midrash--that which is searched out.

The Rabbis conceded that they did not always interpret the biblical verse according to its plain and natural meaning. In spite of that, however, they declared that "the plain meaning of a verse must never be lost sight of."¹ As for their artificial interpretations these must be regarded merely as an attempt "to provide a traditional law with a biblical support."²

The earliest reference to hermeneutic rules is that found in the Tannaitic literature in which it is related that Hillel expounded seven such rules (Middoth) before the Elders of Bathyra.³ This does not mean that they were invented by Hillel but that he was the first to compile

1 Shabbath, 63a; Yebamoth, 11b; 24a. 2 Erubin, 4b; Sukkah, 28a; Kiddushin, 9a.
3 Tosefta, Sanhedrin, VII; Aboth de R. Nathan, 37; Intro. to the Sifra.

them and give them a fixed number.¹ The probability is that he received them from his teachers, Shammai and Abtalion, of whom the Talmud speaks as "great expounders" of the Law.² Certain it is that the development and exposition of the hermeneutic rules were given great impetus in the days of the controversy between the Sadducees and Pharisees. As we have already seen the Sadducees maintained that the oral traditions expounded by the Rabbis were not of divine origin and were therefore without binding quality. The Pharisees, on the other hand, upheld the view that the oral traditions were transmitted to Moses simultaneously with the Written Law and that most of them are implicit in the Pentateuch. Any earnest and conscientious student could find them there by applying the hermeneutic principles. As conditions changed and the need for new laws arose, it became necessary also to expand the rules of hermeneutics. Consequently we find that the seven rules of Hillel were later developed by R. Ishmael into thirteen and then were further expanded by R. Eliezer ben R. Jose the Galilean into thirty-two.

The important thing to bear in mind is that the Torah was regarded by the Rabbis as the divine source of Israel's religious life for all time. Any new law, whether it be ethical or ceremonial in its character, that had to be introduced because of new conditions was at least potentially contained in the Torah. As the Mishnah states, "Turn it (the Torah) and turn it over again, for everything is in it."³ Buried within the Torah

1 See Z. Frankel, Derke ha-Mishnah, p.18.

2 Pesachim, 70b.

3 Aboth, V, 22.

lie deeper meanings than appear on the surface. This thought was especially developed by R. Akiba. He maintained that the Torah was not written in the same style as other writings. Because the Torah is the word of God, every word, even every letter is significant. In human writings there may be found words that are superfluous, but not so with the Torah. If there is an unnecessary word or letter it is there for a reason and a new law may be deduced from it. This is true not only of superfluous words or letters but of every peculiarity of expression. By means of his ingenious method Akiba was able to adapt Judaism to new conditions of life without invalidating the authority and eternal character of the Torah.

Not all of the Rabbis, however, accepted the system of R. Akiba. Chief among his opponents was R. Ishmael. He declared that "the divine Law speaks in the ordinary language of men"¹ and that new deductions could therefore not be made on the strength of a superfluous word or letter. On one occasion he exclaimed to R. Akiba, "Are you going to decree death by fire on the strength of a single letter?"² Nevertheless, R. Ishmael developed his own system of interpreting the law and set up thirteen hermeneutic rules by which this may be done. The rules of R. Ishmael have been widely accepted and the halakic inductions contained in the Rabbinic literature are largely based on them. As already stated above the rules of R. Ishmael are really an expansion of the seven rules of Hillel.

Let us now see what these hermeneutic rules actually are.

1 Sanhedrin, 64b; Kerithoth, 11a and elsewhere.

2 Sanhedrin, 51b.

1. The Seven Rules of Hillel

1. Kal wa-Homer. The inference from minor and major, from the less important to the more important.¹

2. Gezerah Shawah. The analogy of expressions, or inference by analogy. If two words from two different passages are identical, the law which applies to one passage applies also to the other.²

3. Binyan ab mikathub ehad. ~~Literally - one text - one law~~ A law that is found in only one passage is applied to a number of other related passages. In other words, it is the generalization of one special provision.

4. Binyan ab mi-shene Kethubim. The same is true when the law rests on two biblical passages.

5. Kelal u-ferat u-ferat u-Kelal. The General and Particular, the Particular and General, i.e. the detailed determination of the General by means of the Particular, and of the Particular by means of the General.

6. Kayose be-mi-makom aher. The analogy made from another passage.

7. Dabar ha-lamed me'inyano. Something that is deduced from the context.

2. The Contribution to Biblical Exegesis Made by Nahum

In addition to the seven rules of Hillel which were generally adopted, later teachers found it necessary to introduce new methods of interpreting the Torah in order that new deductions ^{might} ~~may~~ be made from it. One of these was Nahum of Gimzo, the teacher of R. Akiba, who introduced the method of Ribbui u-Mi'ut, Inclusion and Exclusion, or Extension and Limitation. According to this method certain particles and conjunctions in the biblical verse were intended to indicate the extension or limitation of its provisions,

1 Cf.p.105.

2 Cf.pp.125-6.

so as to include certain things that are not specifically stated or to exclude them. Among the words that are regarded as extensions are: af, eth, gam and kol (even, with, also, all), and as limitations the words: ah, min, and rak (only, from only).

3. The Development of This Method by R.Akiba

The new method of interpretation introduced by Nahum was not generally accepted by his contemporaries. Some scholars such as R.Nehunia b.Hakana insisted that only the rules of Hillel be employed in the interpretation of the Written Law.¹ In the following generation, however, the method of Nahum was developed into a system by his illustrious disciple, R.Akiba. To the latter, however, the indication of an extension and limitation of the law is not limited to those few particles mentioned by Nahum, but any word or even letter in the Written Law which is not absolutely necessary to convey the meaning of the law is intended to extend or limit the sphere of its provisions. According to Louis Finkelstein, the rules of R.Akiba "had no foundation in tradition" but were invented by him for the purpose of discovering new laws and justifying the old ones.²

4. The Thirteen Rules of R.Ishmael

The seven rules of Hillel were expanded by R.Ishmael into thirteen mainly by subdividing Hillel's fifth rule. He also omitted Hillel's sixth rule and added a new one of his own. His new rule states that when two verses contradict each other they are reconciled by a third verse.

The thirteen rules of R.Ishmael were generally adopted as the authoritative rules of Rabbinic interpretation. They are collected in the introductory

1 Shovuoth, 26a.

2 Akiba, p. 311.

chapter of the Sifra and have even been incorporated in the daily prayer book. This does not mean, however, that they have supplanted the methods of R. Akiba which continued to be employed by many of the Rabbis including some of the close followers of R. Ishmael. The rules of R. Ishmael were later somewhat expanded by his disciples.¹

5. Heckesh (Analogy)

Another principle of interpretation which was not included among the thirteen rules of R. Ishmael but which was generally adopted and frequently applied in the rabbinic interpretation of the law, is referred to as Heckesh. Heckesh is a form of analogy that is somewhat similar to the Gezera Shawah. It is based on the close connection of two subjects in a single passage of the Law. According to this principle when two subjects are connected by a common predicate, the same conditions which apply to one of them are under certain circumstances applicable also to the other.*

6. Semukin (Juxtaposition)

Similar to the Heckesh is another principle of interpretation known as Semukin, contiguous passages, or the analogy drawn from the juxtaposition of two Biblical laws. According to this principle the meaning of a law is sometimes explained from another law or passage which happens to be near by, either preceding or following it.**

7. The Thirty-two Rules of R. Eliezer ben R. Jose

The hermeneutic rules were further expanded by R. Eliezer ben R. Jose

¹ See Z. Frankel, Darke ha-Mishnah, p. 153.

* Cf. p. 151.

** Cf. p. 103.

to thirty-two. Most of his rules, however, apply only to the Haggadah and not to the Halakah. In the Talmud there is no reference made to them. Some of them are applied, however, in the haggadic interpretations of the Amoraim. A Baraitha of R. Eliezer containing his thirty-two rules is not referred to in the writings of Rabbis before the tenth century. In addition to the above there are still other rules that were employed both for the Halakah and the Haggadah. Thus we find that Rashi refers to the "Baraitha of Forty-nine Rules" which has been ascribed to R. Nathan ha-Babli but which is no longer extant.¹

There is a difference of opinion among medieval scholars in regard to the freedom with which one ^{may} apply the hermeneutic rules to the interpretation of Scripture. So far as the Gezerah Shawah (inference by analogy) is concerned there is no controversy because concerning this principle the Talmud states explicitly that one is not authorized to apply it unless the conclusion has been handed down to him by his teacher, who in turn received it from his teacher ad Sinai.² According to the explanation given by Nachmanides, this restriction was necessary because there are a great many words in the Torah that are duplicated in other passages and if one were authorized to make inferences by analogy of expressions independently, there is grave danger that many conflicts would arise in interpretation, and that traditional interpretations would be abrogated.

According to Rashi it appears that not only the Gezerah Shawah but all the thirteen hermeneutic rules, with the exception of the Kal wa-Homer

1 See Z. Frankel, Darke ha-Mishnah, p. 201.

2 Pesachim, 66a.

(the inference from minor and major), cannot be applied independently. In the opinion of the Tosafists, however, this restriction applies only to the Gezerah Shawah.¹ Solomon Algazi (seventeenth century) believes that the difference of opinion between Rashi and the Tosafists may be traced back to a similar controversy which existed among the Tannaim, that Rashi was merely expressing the opinion that was held by R. Judah but that according to the majority of the Rabbis all the hermeneutic rules could be applied independently, the only exception being the Gezerah Shawah.²

Because the Gezerah Shawah is the only principle of hermeneutics that cannot be applied independently, it ranks highest and takes precedence over all other hermeneutic principles. Next in rank comes the Heckesh, which resembles the Gezerah Shawah more closely than any other principle of interpretation. The Gezerah Shawah³ and the Heckesh⁴ are the only hermeneutic principles against whose conclusions you must not argue.*

1 For the controversy between Rashi and the Tosafists see Sukkah, 31a.

2 Yabin Shemayah, 44a.

3 Niddah, 22b.

4 Baba Kamma, 63b.

* In the case of the Gezerah Shawah there is a difference of opinion among the Tannaim whether this rule obtains only when the analogous words of both texts are free for exegesis or whether the same is true when they are free in only one of the texts.

Chapter III

Amos In The Haggadah

It is strange how little is known about the lives of some of the great men in history who have left their impress upon the sands of time. Some of them have helped to shape the destiny of mankind in a very positive way and yet have remained virtually unknown to us so far as their personal lives are concerned. Not least among them are the prophets of Israel. Let us take Deutero-Isaiah as an illustration. Here was a man who was unquestionably one of the great spirits of all times and who made a lasting contribution to the history of religious thought. And yet we know practically nothing about his personal life. We do not even know what his name was.

As we read the Book of Amos we cannot help but regret the fact that we know so little about the life of the humble herdsman from Tekoa who almost over night was transformed into one of the most daring religious reformers in history. We wish that he had been a little more auto-biographical. What is true of Amos is likewise true of the other prophets. Their chief concern was the welfare of Israel and her relationship to God. They did not regard their personal lives as sufficiently important that they should make a permanent record of them. What the Old Testament fails to tell of their lives, however, is frequently filled in by the Rabbis. This is particularly true of the more popular biblical heroes who succeeded in capturing the imagination of the Rabbis. Thus a host of legends have been woven around the lives of such men as Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, and others.

Unfortunately, however, this cannot be said of Amos or of most of the other literary prophets. Tradition has not attached to them the importance and glamour that it attached to some of the other heroes; hence the relatively meager accounts of their lives in Rabbinic literature.

Nevertheless, the Rabbis do shed some light upon the obscure lives of Israel's prophets. How much of it is historical, and how much must be relegated to the realm of fancy, we are not prepared to say. Suffice it to say that some of the traditions concerning the prophets have been handed down by word of mouth for many generations before they were finally committed to writing. These traditions are now scattered throughout the whole area of the Talmuds and Midrashim. It is obviously in the haggadic portions of Rabbinic literature that we find the various anecdotes, legends and episodes relating to the lives of the prophets.

It should be pointed out at the outset that it is rather difficult to get a unified picture of the life of Amos from Rabbinic literature. As was already suggested in the opening chapter, the literature with which we are dealing covers a period of nearly a thousand years and represents the opinions of hundreds of scholars. The best that we can do therefore is to analyze the various sources dealing with the life of Amos and present as unified a picture of him as is possible under the circumstances.

Our first consideration is the period in which Amos prophesied, but, unfortunately, there is no unanimity of opinion concerning his date among the Rabbis. The prevailing opinion appears to be that he was a contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Thus we read in the Talmud: There were four prophets who prophesied in one period, and the oldest of them was Hosea,

as it is said, "The Lord spoke at first with Hosea" (Hos.1.2). The four prophets were: Hosea, Isaiah, Amos and Micah.¹

It is difficult to determine whether it is intended that these prophets be thus named in chronological order. Probably not. The Rabbis were usually not as systematic as all that. Hosea and Micah, however, are named in the order in which they prophesied. We have already seen that Hosea was regarded as the oldest of the four prophets. Micah, on the other hand, was said to have been preceded by his three contemporaries, for he did not begin to prophesy until the days of Jotham, whereas the other three prophesied during the reign of Uzziah.²

As for Amos and Isaiah, however, the prevailing opinion seems to be that the former preceded the latter. Of Amos it is said that he began to prophesy "two years before the earthquake" (Amos 1.1), whereas Isaiah began his ministry on the day of the earthquake, as it is said "And the posts of the door were moved" (Isa.6.4).³

Curiously enough, however, in one Rabbinic source Amos is included among the eight exilic and post-exilic prophets. R. Hanina ben R. Abba says: The phrase 'saith your God' (Isa.40.1) is to be found eight times in Scripture. This number corresponds to the eight prophets who prophesied after the destruction of the Temple. They are: Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Ezekiel and Jeremiah.⁴ Louis Ginzberg calls attention to the fact that the reading here is uncertain and that some texts mention Micah and Habakkuk instead of Joel and Jeremiah.⁵ But all

1 Pesachim, 37a. Cf. Baba Bathra, 14b; Seder Olam Rabba, 20.

2 Seder Olam Rabba, ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 16.

5 Cf. Legends of the Jews, vol. 6, p. 314.

texts apparently include the name of Amos. This is particularly strange when we consider that the superscription in the Book of Amos, the authenticity of which the Rabbis never questioned, specifically states that Amos prophesied "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel."

Neither in the Talmuds nor in the Midrashim is it mentioned how long the ministry of Amos lasted. From one passage, however, we gather that all the prophets prophesied for a considerable period of time. R. Johanan states that there was not a prophet who did not outlive four kings, as we find in the case of Isaiah (Isa.1.1).¹ Thus it appears that Amos, too, in the opinion of the Rabbis, prophesied during the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Sweeping statements, however, such as the one by R. Johanan, are not to be taken literally for the Rabbis are known to have frequently indulged in hyperbole. If we accept the tradition, to which reference will be made later, that Amos was killed by Uzziah, then certainly he could not have prophesied during the reign of the kings who succeeded the latter.

It may be of interest to mention at this point that in his history of the Jews known as 'Shalsheth ha-Kabbalah' (Chain of Tradition), Gedalya Ibn Yehya (sixteenth century) states that Amos received the tradition from Hosea in the year 3110 Anno Mundi (c.650 B.C.), and Isaiah received the tradition from Amos in the year 3140 (c.620 B.C.).² Thus it appears from this source that the ministry of Amos lasted thirty years. There is good

1 Pesachim, 87b.

2 Shalsheth ha-Kabbalah, 18b.

reason, however, to doubt the historicity of these dates, for as Graetz points out, Ibn Yahya's 'Chain of Tradition' "is a confused medley of authentic historical narratives and mere fables."¹ The same source also states that Amos was of the Tribe of Asher.² Where Ibn Yahya derived this from we do not know, unless it be that he believed, as Kimhi did, that Tekoa was in the territory of Asher and that therefore Amos was presumably of the Tribe of Asher.

The Rabbis wished to preclude all doubts that one may have regarding the integrity of Amos as a true prophet. They therefore affirmed that though Amos said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son" (7.14), the truth is that both he and his father were prophets. They then lay down the following rules by which one may be guided as to who was and who was not a prophet. If the name of the prophet's father is mentioned, it is an indication that the father was also a prophet. When the name of the father, however, is not mentioned, then we know that the father was not a prophet. The only exception to that is in the case of Amos whose father was a prophet even though his name is not mentioned, as it is said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son." Just as Amos was a prophet despite the fact that he said he was not a prophet, so his father was a prophet even though he said that his father was not a prophet.³ Furthermore, whenever a prophet's ancestors are not mentioned, his home is always mentioned, as in the case of Amos of whom it is said, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa" (1.1). The only exception to that is Obadiah in whose case neither his father nor his home is mentioned. The Rabbis

1 History of the Jews, vol.4,p.616.

2 Shalahaeth ha-Kabbalah; ibid.

3 Mishnat R.Elizer, 6. Cf. Levit.R.,6.

conclude from this that Obadiah was a proselyte and the least important among the prophets.¹

Amos's bitter denunciation of the Israelites at Beth-el, and particularly his verbal clash with Amaziah, would lead us to think that he must have possessed glibness of tongue and the gift of oratory. To our amazement, however, we discover that, according to the Rabbis, Amos was a stammerer. In fact, R. Pinchas declares that it was because of his impediment in speech that he was called Amos.* The prophet Isaiah relates that as he was walking in his study one day he heard the voice of God say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us (Isa. 6.8)? I have sent Amos and they called him a stammerer. 'Did the Lord pass the whole world and let his inspiration rest on this stammerer, this tongueless man?' they asked" etc.²

We generally think of Amos as a poor shepherd tending someone else's flock. In the opinion of the Rabbis, however, that was not so. According to them Amos was himself the owner of the flocks that he tended and of the sycamore trees that he dressed. Moreover, Amos was one of the four prophets from whom R. Johanan derived that all the prophets were wealthy. He deduced this as follows: From Amos, because it is written, "Then answered Amos 'but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore-trees'", which R. Joseph translated: "Behold, I am the owner of flocks, and possess sycamore trees in the valley."³

1 Aggadath Bereshith, 14.

* From amos, to press, be pressed.

2 Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 16. Cf. Levit. R., 10; Eccles. R., 1.

3 Nedarim, 38a.

It does not necessarily follow from this, however, that Amos enjoyed a life of ease and comfort. In fact, from what Targum Jonathan tells us it appears that quite the contrary was true. In the most revealing passage concerning the inner life of Amos in all Rabbinic literature the Targum quotes the prophet as saying, "Because of the sins of the people of Israel I am afflicting my soul" (7.14). In other words, Amos was really living a life of hardship but it was by choice that he adopted such a life so that Israel's sins may be expiated.

In the opinion of the Rabbis Amos was not merely a young upstart, unknown and unrecognized as a prophet, who had the arrogance to come to the leading shrine in Israel and unleash there a tirade of invectives against the religious and political leaders, not even sparing the king of Israel. On the contrary, Amos was already universally recognized as a true prophet and his reputation as such preceded him to Beth-el. When Amaziah informed Jeroboam of the nature of Amos's prophecy, the king replied: "God forbid that he should have uttered such a prophecy, and if he has, it must have been at God's bidding." We gather from Jeroboam's reply that he must have known Amos to be God's messenger and therefore had profound respect for his prophetic utterances. Jeroboam was later rewarded for having refused to listen to the calumny which Amaziah had directed against the prophet. He was made the instrumentality by which God fulfilled His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give the land of Canaan to his seed (Deut.34.4), as it is said, "He (Jeroboam) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah" (2 K.14.25). His refusal to listen to slander hurled against the prophet was the great

merit of Jeroboam despite the fact that he was an idol worshipper.¹ R. Johanan adds that it was because of this merit that Jeroboam was considered worthy of being mentioned together with the kings of Judah (Hos.1.1).²

The dignity of Amos as a prophet was not lowered any as a result of the fact that he tended sheep and pruned trees. On the contrary, the mere fact that Amos engaged in menial work raised such work to a position of honor and dignity. Consequently the Rabbis say: Work should be held in high esteem for all the prophets engaged in it. Of Jacob it is said, "I will again feed thy flock and keep it" (Gen.30.31). . . .Of Amos it is said, "But I was a herdman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees; and the Lord took me from following the flock" (7.14-15).³

Furthermore, it was ^{as} a tender of flock that God first tested Amos in order to determine whether he would qualify as shepherd of the flock of Israel. It was therefore not by accident or mere chance that he received the divine call to minister to Israel, but only after successfully passing the severe test of leadership. The Rabbis declared that God never raises one to a position of responsibility or distinction unless he had first tested him as a tender of flock. They derived this from David (1 Sam. 17.28), Jacob (Gen.30.36), Moses (Exod.4.18) and Amos who said, "And the Lord took me from following the flock" (7.15).⁴

Amos does not disclose in his book whether he obeyed the command of Amaziah to return to Judah and prophesy there. We should have liked to

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 17; Seder Eliyyahu Zuta, 7. 2 Pesahim, 87b.

3 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 20. Cf. Md. Gadol u-Gedolah, Beth ha-Midrash, ed. Jell., vol.3, pp.125-6.

4 Ginzeh Schechter, vol.1, p.47. Cf. Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Exod., 3b.

know what followed the episode at Beth-el. Did Amos remain there to resume his invectives against the rich and corrupt or did he return to Judah? Assuming that he returned to Judah, did he continue with his prophetic ministrations or did he retire to private life and write down the oracles that he had delivered at Beth-el?

Unfortunately, the Rabbinic writings shed little light on these questions. The only source that gives us any information as to what happened to Amos following his visit to Beth-el is the Shalsheleth ha-Kabbalah (Chain of Tradition) of Ibn Yahya, and that we already observed above (p.43) is not entirely reliable as an historical document. According to this source, Uzziah, king of Judah, struck Amos on his forehead with a glowing iron and killed him.¹ If the tradition is true, then we are probably safe in drawing at least three conclusions from it: (1) that Amos did return to Judah; (2) that he continued his ministry there; and (3) that he followed the precedent he had set at Beth-el in not even sparing the royal house in his invectives and pronouncements of judgment.

Amos was apparently held in high esteem by the Rabbis for we find that they ascribed to him a position in the council of the Messiah. In Micah 5.4 we read: "And this shall be peace: When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes among men." The

* Louis Ginzberg believes that this tradition is probably based on a Christian source (See Legends of the Jews, vol.6, p.357).

1 Shalsheleth ha-Kabbalah, 99b.

'seven shepherds' are: David, who will sit in the center; Adam, Seth and Methuseiah at his right; Abraham, Jacob and Moses at his left. The 'eight princes among men' are: Jesse, Saul, Samuel, Amos, Zephaniah, Hezekiah (not Zedekiah as given in some texts), Elijah and the Messiah.¹

Another illustration showing that Amos was greatly respected by the Rabbis is the fact that they ascribed to him the faculty of catching the true spirit of religion and of reducing its essence to a single precept. R. Simlai expounded: The six hundred and thirteen commandments that were given to Moses were reduced by David to eleven (Ps.15); Isaiah reduced them to six (33.15); Micah reduced them to three (6.8); Isaiah further reduced them to two (56.1). Finally, Amos came and reduced them all to one, as it is said, "For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel; Seek ye Me, and live" (5.4).²

Now, let us consider what the Rabbis had to say about the Book of Amos and the nature of its contents. In the opinion of the Rabbis the prophecies of Amos were not committed to writing by the prophet himself but at a much later date by the Men of the Great Assembly. In fact all of the twelve books of the minor prophets, as well as the books of Ezekiel and Daniel and the scroll of Esther were, according to the Rabbis, written down by the Men of the Great Assembly.³ Rashi offers the explanation that

1 Sukkah, 52b. Cf. Se'udoth Leviathan, Beth ha-Midrash, ed. Jell., vol.6, p.150. Note. The identity of the 'seven shepherds' is not the same in the latter source.

2 Makkoth, 24b.

3 Baba Bathra, 15a.

the minor prophets did not commit their prophecies to writing for fear they would get lost because of their size. When Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi saw, however, that the Holy Spirit was departing and that there were not going to be any more prophets after them, they immediately wrote down their prophecies and added to them in the same volume the oracles of the other minor prophets, thus forming one large volume.

As for the nature of the prophecies, the Rabbis acknowledged that they were intensely severe. There were three prophets whose prophecies were ascribed to themselves and not to God. These were: "The words of Koheloth" (Eccles. 1.1), "The words of Amos" (1.1), and "The words of Jeremiah" (1.1). The reason for this is that their prophecies were full of reproaches¹

The Rabbis based their judgment that Amos spoke reproachfully on the verse "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria" (4.1).² It is because his utterances were marked by severe words of censure that he is the only one of the twelve minor prophets concerning whom it is said, "The words of" etc.³

On the other hand, the Rabbis contend that the message of Amos was not wholly without mercy or compassion, and his call to repentance contained in the words "Seek ye Me, and live" (5.4), is regarded by them as the sweet message.⁴ Amos also manifested a certain tenderness of feeling and sympathy for the plight of Israel when he said, "O Lord God, cease, I

1 Eccles. R., 1. Cf. Md. Zuta, Eccles., ed. Pub., 1.

2 Sifre, 64a.

3 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 3.

4. Cant. R., 6.

beseech Thee; how shall Jacob stand? for he is small" (7.5). It was with the power of this stirring plea that Amos succeeded in abolishing one of the four hardships that Moses had pronounced against Israel, as it is said, "The Lord repented concerning this; 'This also shall not be,' saith the Lord God" (7.6).¹

In yet another passage the Rabbis indicate that there was a softer side to Amos's nature and that he did not wish to see Israel destroyed. Legend has it that when the Israelites sinned in the wilderness, God lamented as follows: I never performed any miracles for Jacob and yet he was always righteous before Me; for Israel, on the other hand, I performed countless miracles and mighty deeds, but as yet they have not come under the wings of the Shekinah (Divine Presence) When Amos learned that God was going to bring judgment upon Israel he began to plead before Him as follows: O Master of the Universe! Is the entire world to be destroyed because it does not have any men like Jacob in it? God did not allow Amos to depart before He assured him that Israel would be forgiven, as it is said, "The Lord repented concerning this; 'It shall not be,' saith the Lord" (7.3). On the other hand, the Rabbis continue, God lamented that in the days of Amos, as well as in the days of Hosea, Joel, and all the other prophets, they did not know how to plead on behalf of Israel with as much passion and earnestness as was manifested by Moses.²

1 Makkoth, 24a.

2 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 6.

It should not surprise us that we find in the Book of Amos an intermingling of harshness and compassion, judgment and comfort for, according to the Rabbis, that was characteristic of all the prophets who thereby merely followed the example set by Moses. When the latter first addressed himself to Israel he spoke to them harshly but later on he uttered words of comfort, as it is said, "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death" (Deut.33.1). . . . The same was true of Amos. At first he said, "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan" etc. (4.1), but subsequently he used words of comfort, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" etc. (9.11).¹

¹ Sifre, 141b.

Chapter IV

A Commentary on Amos from the View-
point of the Rabbinic Sources

In this chapter we shall present verse by verse the text of the Book of Amos followed by the various interpretations of the Rabbis culled from Targum Jonathan, the Talmuds and the Midrashim. Virtually all Rabbinic passages which contain a reference to Amos have been included, irrespective of the fact whether they shed any light on the text or not. The verses on which no Rabbinic comments are to be found have been left out entirely.

I.1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Who was among the herdmen/ Targ. Who was the owner of flocks.

The words of Amos/ There were three prophets ^{whose} ~~who~~ prophecies were ascribed to themselves and not to God: "The words of Koheleth" (Eccles.I.1); "The words of Amos" (I.1); "The words of Jeremiah" (Jer.I.1). This was because their prophecies contained reproaches.¹ R.Pinhas said: He was named Amos, because he was a stammerer.* When the people of his generation heard him prophesy, they exclaimed, "Could God not find anyone upon whom to rest His Holy Spirit except upon this stammerer."²

1 Eccles. R.,1. Cf. Mishnat R.Elizer,3; Sifre, 64a; Md.Zuta, ed.Bub.,Eccles.1.

* A derivation of amos, to press, be pressed.

2 Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 16. Cf. Levit. R.,10; Eccles.R.,1.

From the opening verse of their respective books we derive that Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and Micah all prophesied in one period. The first of them to prophesy was Hosea, as it is said, "The Lord spoke at first with Hosea" (Hos.1.2); Amos began to prophesy "two years before the earthquake" (1.1); Isaiah began to prophesy on the day of the earthquake, as it is said, "And the posts of the door were moved" (Isa.6.4); the last of the four to prophesy was Micah, as it is said, "The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morashtite in the days of Jotham" etc.* (Micah 1.1).¹ of Tekoa/ Whenever the ancestry of a prophet is not given, his home is always mentioned, as in the case of Amos and Micah. In the case of Obadiah, neither his ancestry nor his home is mentioned. This is because he was a proselyte and the least important among the prophets.²

Two years before the earthquake/ "And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people" (Isa.7.8). This decree was already issued in the days of Amos, "two years before the earthquake" (1.1), as it is said, "For thus Amos saith: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land" (7.11).³

I.2 And he said: The Lord roareth from Zion, and uttereth His voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

* The other three prophesied while Uzziah was still king.

1 Seder Olam Rabba, 20. 2 Aggadath Bereshith, 14. 3 Seder Olam Rabba, 28.

And the pastures of the Shepherds shall mourn etc.,⁷ Targ. And the residences of the kings shall be desolate and their fortified cities shall be destroyed.*

I.3 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they have threshed Gilead with sledges of iron.

I will not reverse it⁷ Targ. I will not forgive them.

For three transgressions of Damascus⁷ When misfortune befalls the Israelites, the nations of the world** act towards them as though they did not even know them. Thus we find that in time of peril when the Israelites sought to flee towards the north, the people of the north handed them over to the enemy, as it is said: "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre" (Amos 1.9); when they sought to flee towards the south, the people of the south handed them over to the enemy, as it is said: "For three transgressions of Gaza" (Amos 1.6): when they attempted to flee towards the east, the people of the east delivered them to the enemy, as it is said: "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus" (Amos 1.3). On the other hand, when Israel enjoys good fortune, the nations act deceitfully toward them and pretend that they are their brethren. Thus Esau said to Jacob: "I have enough, my brother, let that which thou hast

* The Targum interprets ro'im, shepherds in the sense of kings who are the shepherds of their people. Cf. Micah 5.3.

** According to another reading, 'Babylonians' instead of 'nations of the world'.

be thine" (Gen.33.9). Similarly, Hiram said to Solomon, "What cities are there which thou hast given me, my brother?" (1K.9.13). They were as foolish as those who said, "Our hand is exalted, and not the Lord hath wrought all this" (Deut.32.37), or as those who said, "Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" (Amos 6.13).¹

1.5 And I will break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from Bikath-aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Beth-seden; and the people of Aram shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.

The bar of Damascus/ Targ. The power of Damascus.

1.6 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they carried away captive a whole captivity, to deliver them up to edom.

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Gaza/ See commentary on 1.3, p.64.

1.8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn My hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.

1 Sifre, 138a. Cf. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.138; Lament.R.,1.

And him that holdeth the sceptre (shebet) from Ashkelon/ "The sceptre (shebet) shall not depart from Judah" (Gen.49.10). By sceptre is meant ruler, as it is said, "And him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon."¹

I.9 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they delivered up a whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant.

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Tyre/ See commentary on I.3, p.54.

Because they delivered up a whole captivity to Edom/ "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon" etc. (Ik. 11.26). Jeroboam was a servant because he caused Israel to become the slaves of other nations. He was a servant of Solomon (Shelomo), because he handed the Israelites over wholly (hishlimom) to their enemies, as it is written, "It is wholly (shelomin) carried away captive" (Jer.13.19), and as it is also said, "Because they delivered up a whole (shelemah) captivity."²

And remembered not the brotherly covenant/ When Miriam was stricken with leprosy because she had uttered words of slander against her brother Moses, Aaron said to the latter: Do you think it is Miriam who has been afflicted with leprosy? It is really we who have been so afflicted. The situation

* The interpretation is derived by the principle of the Gezerah Shawah (the analogy of expressions). Just as shebet in Amos 1.8 means ruler, so shebet in Gen.49.10 means ruler.

1 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen.,737. ** The Rabbis play on the word Shelomo (Solomon), which according to them is a derivation of sholem, whole.

2 Md. Tadshe, 16, Beth ha-Midrash, ed.Jell.vol.3,p.180.

may be compared to one who takes a burning coal in his hand; no matter how much he keeps tossing it about, he still burns his skin. Aaron then proceeded to appease his brother. Have we ever done anybody any harm? he asked. No, Moses replied. Surely, then, if we have never done any harm to anybody, we would certainly not do any harm to you who are our brother. What can I do? It was an inadvertent act; we have annulled the covenant which we had made with you, as it is said, "And remembered not the brotherly covenant." Shall we lose our sister because of this? Moses accepted Aaron's explanation and began to pray at once for his sister's recovery, as it is said, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" (Num.12.13).¹

I.11 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.

Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom⁷ If a woman who partook of the water of bitterness in order that her chastity may be determined* possesses a merit, it causes the water to suspend its effect upon her. Some merit suspends the effect for one year, another for two years, and another for three years. That the respite of one year may be

¹ Aboth de R. Nathan, IX,2.

* See Num., Ch.5.

trebled is derived by R. Ishmael from the words "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom" (Amos 1.11).^{*1}

Because he did pursue his brother with the sword/ When Joseph saw that his brothers were in trouble he was moved to compassion. But not so Esau. He did not show his brother any pity, as it is said, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword."²

When Israel sent messengers to Edom to request permission to pass through her land, she did so with sentiments of love and friendship, as it is said, "Thus saith thy brother Israel" (Num.20.14). Edom's reply, however, was unbrotherly, as it is said, "Lest I come out with the sword against thee" (ibid.20.18). Israel said, "I am all peace; but when I speak, they are for war" (Ps.120.7). Therefore it is said, "For three transgressions of Edom. . . .because he did pursue his brother with the sword."³

Rebekah, in simple piety, advised Jacob to flee to Laban and tarry with him "a few days" (Gen.27.44) until Esau's anger subsides. Jacob went and tarried twenty years but Esau's wrath was not yet assuaged. This shows us that murder was Esau's trade, as it is said, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword."⁴

Though Esau saw that Jacob was penniless, he nevertheless showed him no compassion but said instead, I shall meet him on the way and there I shall kill him, as the prophet said, "Because he did pursue his brother

* Just as God pardons an individual for his first three transgressions, so He will withhold punishment from the woman for a period of three years.

1 Soṭah, 21a.
Gen.R., 67.

2 Pesikta Rabbati, 13.
4 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 9.

3 Md. Tehillim, Ps. 109. Cf.

with the sword and did cast off all pity."¹

2 When Jacob was still in his mother's womb, Esau already quarreled with him, as it is said, "And the children struggled together within her" (Gen.25.22), and as it is also said, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword" etc.²

"And I will avenge their blood that I have not yet avenged" (Joel 4.21). This is as it is said, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword" etc.³

And did cast off all pity/ R.Judah says: When Esau was about to be born he severed his mother's womb so that she would not be able to bear any more children, as it is said, "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword and destroy his womb.(i.e. the womb which contained him)."⁴

What a contrast between Esau and Joseph. Joseph fed his brothers and Esau sought to kill his brother; Joseph was ready to lay down his life in order to protect his mother's honor, as it is said, "And after came Joseph near and Rachel and they bowed down" (Gen.33.7)**; Esau, on the other hand, wanted to kill his mother, as it is said, "And he did destroy his womb."⁵

And his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever/ "And he (Esau) went into a land away from his brother Jacob" (Gen.36.6). It

1 Tanhuma, ed. Bub. Wa'yeze, p.73.

2 Tanhuma, Mi'kez, 10.

3 Gen.R., 82.

* According to R.Judah's interpretation rahamov is a derivation of rehev, womb.

4 Tanhuma, Te'ze, 4. Cf. Pesikta Rabbati, 12; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.23; Mishnat R.Eliezer, 9.

** Joseph preceded his mother in order to protect her from Esau.

5 Tanhuma, Te'ze, 10.

was not not because he had removed the jealousy from his heart that he departed, for "his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever." Even though he left at this time he later returned with four thousand men to wage war against Jacob."¹

"And his anger did tear perpetually" the reference is to Amalek;
 "And he kept his wrath for ever"--this refers to the wicked Haman.²

I.13 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.

Because they have ripped up the women with child (horoth) of Gilead/
 Strangely enough, this verse is not quoted in the entire Talmudic-Midrashic literature. The Targum translates horoth as meaning pregnant.

The Medieval Jewish commentators are divided as to its meaning.

Rashi interprets it to mean pregnant women. Kimhi and Ibn Ezra, however, seem to prefer to interpret it as though it were written "harim," mountains,
 though
 / they concede that the other interpretation is also possible. Ibn Ezra points out that certain Hebrew words have for their ending in the plural form both -im and -oth, as for example "shanim," shanoth," (years).

1 Md. Vayyissa'u, Yalkut, I,133.

2 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 43c. Cf. Mishnat R. Eliezer, 9.

II.1 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.

Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime⁷ Targ. Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom and plastered the house with them (i.e. their ashes) as with lime.

The Talmud relates the following interesting episode. R.Dimi of Nahardea brought dry figs in a boat. The Exilarch instructed Raba to go and see whether he is well versed in the law and if he should find that he is, to reserve the market for him. Raba then sent R.Adda bar Abba to test his scholarship. The latter accordingly asked him a point of law but he could give no answer. R.Dimi then said to him, "Are you Raba?" He tapped him gently on his sandal and replied: "Between me and Raba there is a great difference, but, nevertheless I can be your master, and so Raba is your master's master." The market was consequently not reserved for him and his figs were a total loss. He came to R.Joseph and said: "See what they have done to me!" R.Joseph replied: "He who did not fail to avenge the degradation to which the king of Edom was subjected, will not fail to avenge your degradation, for it is written, 'Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Moab, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime'" (Amos 2.1).¹

1 Baba Bathra, 22a.

II.2 So will I send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the horn.

The Palaces of Kerioth/Targ. The palaces of the city."

II.4 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept His statutes, and their lies have caused them to err, after which their fathers did walk.

Because they have rejected the law of the Lord/7 Destruction has come to the land because Israel neglected the law, as it is said, "Wherefore is the land perished. . . .because they have forsaken My law which I set before them" (Jer. 9.11-12), and as it is also said, "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah. . . .because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept His statutes."¹

II.6 Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not reverse it: because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes.

And the needy for a pair of shoes/7 Targ. And the needy in order to take possession of them. Bashi explained this Targum as follows: By pervert-

* From Kirya, city. The Targum probably translates it city because of the article ha.

¹ Sifre, 79b.

ing justice the judge compels the poor man to sell his field which happens to be situated between two of his own fields. Subsequently by circumvention the judge manages to purchase the field himself thus closing in the field of the poor man among his own fields. Rashi maintains that the Targum derives this interpretation from na'alayim which according to him is a derivation of na-al, to close, or lock, not of na'al, shoe.

For three transgressions of Israel¹ R. Jose b. Judah says: If a man commits a sin once, he is forgiven; twice, he is forgiven; thrice, he is forgiven; a fourth time, he is not forgiven, for it is said: "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea for four, I will not reverse it" (Amos 2.6).¹

When the brothers saw Joseph coming toward them, they threw him immediately into the pit, stripped him of his coat, and then sold him four times,* as it is said, "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not reverse it" etc.²

Because they sell the righteous for silver³ "Noah was a righteous and whole-hearted man" (Gen. 6.9). Two men were called righteous because they fed the people: Noah and Joseph, for thus it is written concerning Joseph, "Because they sell the righteous for silver."³

"And they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels shekels of silver" (Gen. 37.28). Each of the ten brothers received twenty shekels, thus making a total of two hundred.** This is suggested by the above verse in Amos for the Hebrew word for shoes,

1 Yoma, 86b. Cf. Tosefta, Yoma, IV, 12; Sanhedrin, 7a.

* The brothers to the Ishmaelites, the Ishmaelites to the merchantmen, the merchantmen to the Midianites and the Midianites to the Egyptians. See Midrash Lekah Tob, Gen. 37.36.

2 Aggadath Bereshith, 73. 3 Tanpuma, Noah, 5. Cf. Tanpuma, ed. Bub., Noah, p. 16.

** The Midrash explains that though Reuben was not present at the time that Joseph was sold, thus making nine instead of ten, the other brothers took Reuben's share and gave it to him later.

na-alayim, has a numerical value of two hundred.*¹

According to another Midrash the total sum received by the brothers for Joseph was twenty shekels. Each of the brothers took two shekels with which to purchase shoes, as it is said, "Because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes."²

The Midrash relates that the Jews had taught the Torah to Hadrian. One day as the emperor was studying the Torah he was struck by the verse "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him. . . he shall surely be put to death" (Exod.21.16). He immediately went and covered all the walls of his house with shoes, sent for R.Simeon ben Gamaliel and his comrades and asked them to tell him what the law is in the case of one who steals a man and sells him. They replied that such a person deserves capital punishment. Whereupon the emperor told them that they were guilty of death and ordered them to accept the divine law unto themselves. When they asked him for an explanation he told them that it was because Joseph had been sold by his brothers,^{as} it is written, "And they sold Joseph" (Gen.37.28), and as it is also written, "Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2.6). The emperor had covered the house with shoes in order to help them recall the amount for which the brothers had sold Joseph, as it is said, "for a pair of shoes,"—for the cost of a pair of shoes.³

* The principle of interpretation here employed is called Gematria (Computation of the numeric value of letters). It is one of the thirty-two hermeneutic principles ascribed to R.Eliezer ben R.Jose and is applied only in the Haggadah.

1 Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Intro.P.64.

2 Pirke R.Eliezer,38.

3 Ma'ase Asara Harug'e Malkuth, Beth ha-Midrash, ed.Jell.VI,p.19.

II.7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the humble; and a man and his father go unto the same maid, to profane My holy name.

That pant after the dust etc. [7] Targ. Who despise with the dust of the earth upon the head of the poor.

That pant after the dust of the earth etc. [7] "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth" (Gen.28.14). Just as the dust is trodden upon by all, so your children, when they sin, will be trodden upon by all the nations of the world, and thus it is said, "That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor," and as it is also said, "And made them like the dust in threshing" (2K.13.7).¹

And a man and his father go unto the same maid etc. [7] They did not do this to satisfy their lust but "to profane My holy name," i.e. to provoke Him.²

II.9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them etc. [7] In enumerating the physical defects that render a priest unfit to perform the priestly functions, the Talmud included one who is abnormally tall. The question is then raised, has not R.Abuhe stated that the Almighty takes pride in those who are tall, as it is said, "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose

1 Md. ha-Cadol, Gen., 453.

2 Deut.R.,2.

10. The first of these is the fact that the

head of the body, and that the

head is the first of the body, and

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height was like the height of the cedars?" (Amos 2.9). The reply given is that the Talmud speaks here of one who is not only very tall but also so thin that he does not carry his height well, thus giving the appearance of an abnormal condition.¹

"The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars" (Ps.29.5). They are the wicked who because of their haughtiness are likened in this world unto the cedars of Lebanon, as it is said, "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them. . . .yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath." By "his fruit" is meant the body, and "his roots" refers to the soul.²

The Midrash lists a number of divine acts which were performed by means of the Hebrew word "Anoki," I. Among them are: creation of heaven and earth (Isa.45.12), redemption of Israel from Egypt (Ex.20.2), revelation on Mt. Sinai (Ex.20.2), and the destruction of the Amorite (Amos2.9). Whether or not this Midrash was influenced by Philo's doctrine of the Logos is entirely conjectural. It does appear, at least on the surface, as though there may be some relationship between them, especially since the Logos according to Philo is God's instrument in creation and in revelation.³

Men who are bright in business and worldly affairs but who are ignorant of the words of the Torah may be likened unto the cedar. Just as the cedar does not give forth any fruit, so it is with him who has no

1 Bekoroth, 45b.

2 Md. Alpha Beta de R. Akiba, Beth ha-Midrash, III, p.48.

3 Pesikta Hadeta, Beth ha-Midrash, VI, p.42.

knowledge of the Torah, as it is said: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars" (Amos 2.9), and as it is also said: "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars" (Ps. 29.5). These are the men who lived in the days of the first Temple; they were smart in worldly affairs but were ignorant of the law.¹

"And ye shall dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves" (Deut. 11.23). Why is the word "mikem" (than yourselves) repeated? Has it not already been said: "Seven nations, greater and mightier than thou?" (Deut. 7.1). We derive from the word "mikem," that the Amorite alone, of the seven nations, was as great and mighty as all of Israel, and thus it is said: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite" etc.²

"When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, thou shalt not be afraid of them" (Deut. 20.1). The situation is analogous to the parable that is related of two men who were standing at the entrance of the school-house, one was tall in stature but illiterate, the other was short in stature but a student of the law. The tall one said haughtily, "I shall enter first." Whereupon the other replied, "Do not be so haughty because of your height." After they entered it was soon discovered that he who was of short stature possessed profound erudition and was immediately given a seat of honor. Thus the Almighty said, "Do not fear them," for it is

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 2.

2 Sifre, 85a.

...of the town, as it is said: "The heights of the town are the heights of the town" (Gen. 11:3), and as
it is also said: "The voice of the town is the voice of the town" (Gen. 11:3).
Those are the men who lived in the town of the first tower; they were
...in worldly affairs but were ignorant of the law.
...and the shall disappear and shall be forgotten from your
... (Gen. 11:3). Why is the word "tower" (Gen. 11:3) repeated?
It is not already said: "Seven towers, broken and shattered, that
stand" (Gen. 11:3). The answer from the word "tower" is that the tower is
of the seven towers, was as great and mighty as all of them, and that
it is said: "The heights of the town" (Gen. 11:3).
...when they went forth to build against him enemies, and when
... and the tower, and a people were there, then shall not be
... of them" (Gen. 11:3). The answer is analogous to the previous
that he related of two men who were standing at the entrance of the tower
... and the wall in distance and in distance, the other was, "I shall
... a statement of the law. The wall was built, "I shall
... the other is built, "I shall not be so high as the tower"
of your height. After they entered it was soon discovered that the
was of about seven hundred and seventy and was built on a
... of them. From the heights, "I shall not be so high as the tower"

...of the tower, "I shall not be so high as the tower"

...of the tower, "I shall not be so high as the tower"

said: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite" etc.¹

"Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them" (Judges 3:1). A king once planted a vineyard in which there were large cedars and thorns. The king cut the cedars but left the thorns. Said the servants to the king, "Our Lord, the king, the thorns which catch on our garments you left, but the cedars you cut down. The king replied, "If I were to cut down the thorns how would I fence in my vineyard." Thus Israel is God's vineyard, as it is said: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Isa. 5:7). He brought them into the land and cut down the cedars that were in it, as it is said: "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars." He left their children, however, in order that Israel may adhere to the Torah, as it is said: "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them" (Judg. 3:1).²

How were the Amorites put to death? R. Abba said: God bound them and the Israelites came and killed them as it is said, "So the Lord our God delivered into our hand" etc. (Deut. 3:3), as a man binds the enemy of his son and hands him over to him. And let it not be said that the Amorites were small, for is it not written concerning them, "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars," etc.³

Sihon, the king of the Amorites, was as hard as a tower and a town-wall and more cruel than all men; he was taller than any tower and no being in the world could stand up against him. How did God deal with him? He

1 E'leh ha-Debarim Zuta, Yalkut, I, 923.

2 Tanhuma, Re'e, 95.

3 Tanhuma, Mishpattim, 18; Cf. Tanhuma, ed. Bub. Mishpattim, p. 44.

overthrew his angel,* as it is said: "Yet I destroyed his fruit from above," then threw him down and delivered him to Israel.¹

Whose height was like the height of the cedars/ When God speaks figuratively of the other kingdoms, He compares them to cedars, as it is said: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon" etc. (Ezek.31.3), and as it is said, "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars" (Amos 2.9). . . . But when He speaks figuratively of the Egyptians, He compares them to stubble, as it is said: "It consumeth them as stubble" (Ex.15.7).²

Yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath/ "His fruit from above" refers to their angel, "And his roots from beneath" refers to the Amorites themselves.³

"Moreover the Lord was very angry with Aaron (l'hashmido) to have destroyed him (Deut.9.20). Whenever the word hashmada is used, it always implies the death of children, as it is said, "Yet I destroyed (va-ashmid) his fruit from above and his roots from beneath." All of Aaron's children were to have died, only Moses interceded for him."⁴

Though God said, "And I will send the hornet before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite" etc. (Ex.23.28), the hornet did not

* According to Rabbinic lore every being has his own angel who acts as his guardian.

1 Md. Tehillim, Ps.136. Cf. Tanhuma, Debarim,4.

2 Mekilta, 40a. Cf. Can. R.,2; Ginzei Schechter,I,Mekilta de R.Simeon b.Yohai,p.352.

3 Tanhuma, Mishpattim,18; Cf. Tanhuma,ed. Bub, Mishpattim,p.41.

** The interpretation is derived by applying the principle of the Gezerah Shawah (the analogy of expressions).

4 Num.R.,9. Cf. Lev. R.,7; Tanhuma, Te'zaveh,10; Ahar'e,8; Pesikta Rabbati,48.

accompany Israel into the land of Canaan but stood by the bank of the Jordan, and injected a virus into the Canaanites which blinded their eyes above and castrated them below, as it is said, "Yet destroyed I the Amorite. . . yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath."¹

II.11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets,
and of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not
even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the
Lord.

For Nazirites⁷ Targ. For teachers.

And I raised up of your sons for prophets⁷ There were twenty-four* good things in the world, all of which were destroyed as a result of sin, but in the end of days God will restore them all to Israel. Included among these are 1) the dynasty of David, as it is said: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9.11), and 2) the Holy Spirit, as it is written, "And I raised up of your sons for prophets" (Amos 2.11). Because they sinned the holy spirit departed from them, as it is said: "Yea, her prophets find no vision from the Lord" (Lament. 2.9), but some time in the future God will restore it to Israel, as it is said: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 3.1).²

1 Sotah, 36a. Cf. Num.R., 18; Tanhuma, Hukath, 1; Tanhuma, ed. Euber, Hukath, p.50.

* According to another source twenty-two.

2 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 130.

II.13 Behold, I will make it creak under you,
as a cart creaketh that is full of sheaves.

Behold, I will make it creak etc.] Targ. Behold, I will bring distress
upon you and will press you in your towns as a cart is pressed that is
laden with sheaves.

II.16 And he that is courageous among the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord.

Shall flee away naked] Targ. Stripped of his armour.

III.1 Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken
against you, O children of Israel, against the
whole family which I brought up out of the land
of Egypt.

Hath spoken against you] Targ. Has decreed against you.

III.2 You only have I known of all the families
of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all
your iniquities.

You only have I known] Targ. In you alone have I delighted.

You only have I known etc.] "You only have I known of all the families of
the earth"—the reference is to Israel from the midst of the seventy

nations. "Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities"--this refers to the scholars from the midst of the congregation of Israel."¹

With the Amorites God waited until their measure of sins was full so that he could punish them for all their sins at one time, as it is said, "For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full" (Gen.15.16). In the case of Israel, however, it is said, "Therefore I will visit their sins upon them, one by one, so that they will not crumble because of the multitude of their sins."²

The Midrash relates the following parable: A certain powerful man killed many strong men merely by slapping them or by striking them with his fist. This same man, on the other hand, has often slapped his own wife but she never succumbed. The neighbors often wondered at this and remarked to her that she must possess unusual powers of endurance. She replied: "When he strikes the strong men he does so with fury and with all the power at his command; when he strikes me, however, he takes into consideration my physical weakness, therefore I am able to endure his blows." Similarly, when God punished the generation of Enosh he did so without mercy, as it is written: "That calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth" (Amos 5.8). The same was true of the generation of the flood (See Gen.7.23), and the generation of the tower of Babel (ibid.11.8). But of Israel God said: "And ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Malachi 3.6), as it is said: "Surely against

* God deals more strictly with the scholar than with the rank and file.
 1 Seder Eliyahu Rabba, 15. 2 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 238.

me He turneth His hand again and again all the day" (Lam.3.3). God keeps turning Israel over every little while, as it is said: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."¹

The Talmud relates the following story: R.Abuhuh landed R.Safra before the non-Jewish tax collectors as an outstanding scholar. They accordingly exempted him from paying taxes for thirteen years. One day they met him and asked him to explain the words "You only have I known" etc. If one is angry, they asked, will he let it out on one whom he loves? He remained silent because he did not know the answer. They put a shawl around his neck and tormented him. Just then R.Abuhuh arrived upon the scene and when he saw what they were doing to his colleague asked them for the reason. They replied: "Did you not tell us that he is a great scholar, yet he could not explain to us the meaning of this verse." R. Abuhuh explained that he had told them of R.Safra that he was a great Talmudic scholar but he had never told them that he was a great Biblical scholar. They then asked him why he was able to expound Biblical verses. He replied: "Because I am in your company a great deal I take special pains to be familiar with it." "Will you, then, explain this verse to us?" they asked. He replied: "I shall tell you a parable. A certain man had two debtors, one of them was a friend of his and the other an enemy. His friend he permitted to repay him a little at a time but from his enemy he

1 Aggadath Bereshith, 8.

exacted full payment all at once."¹ Similarly, God punishes Israel gradually, a little at a time, but the heathen is punished all at once.*

III.5 Will a Bird fall in a snare upon the earth,
where there is no lure for it? Will a snare spring
up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?

Will a bird fall in a snare etc.⁷ The word pah (snare) is used only in connection with zipor (bird), as it is said, "Will a bird (zipor) fall in a snare (pah) upon the earth."²

"That the godless man reign not, that there be none to ensnare the people" (Job 34.30). R.Johanan said: If a godless and wicked person is the leader of the generation, it is better for the generation to fly in the air than to submit to his leadership. The term to ensnare is used only in connection with flying, as it is said, "Will a bird fall into a net upon the earth, when there is no one to ensnare it?"³

III.6 Shall the horn be Blown in a city, and the
people not tremble, shall evil befall a city, and
the Lord hath not done it?

Shall the horn be Blown in a city⁷ Targ. Shall the horn be Blown in a city at a time when it is not expected etc. Kimhi explains that the Targum adds the words "at a time when it is not expected" because frequently the

1 Abodah Zara, 4a.

* Rashi, the noted commentator of the Talmud, makes the observation that the word pekidah implies gradual and periodic visitation.

2 Num.R.12. Cf. Md.Tehillim, Ps.91.

3 Deut. R.,5.

horn is blown in a city and the people do not tremble as when they are summoned to attend a joyous occasion or a meeting for the welfare of the community.

If the horn be blown in a city and the people do not tremble (do not do penance), then, shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it? The blowing of the Shofar refers to the New Year which according to Jewish tradition is the day of judgment. God instructed the people of Israel to blow the Shofar on the New Year in order that the sound of the Shofar may cause them to tremble and thus lead them to do penance. If, however, the sound of the Shofar falls upon deaf ears and fails to cause the people to tremble, then "Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"¹

"Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God" (Hosea 14.2). "Shall the horn be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?" etc. The situation is analogous to that of a city that was endangered by troops. There was one old man in the city who warned his fellow-townsmen of the impending danger. Whoever heeded the warning was saved but those who did not heed the warning were killed by the troops. . . . Thus "Shall the horn be blown in a city," on the New Year, "and the people not tremble," this refers to Israel; "Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" God

1 Pesikta Rabbati, 41. Cf. Pesikta Hadeta, Beth ha-Midrash, VI, p. 60.

takes no delight in the death of the wicked, as it is said: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" etc. (Ezek. 33.11). . . .What do I ask of you, my people? "Seek ye Me, and live" (Amos 5.4). Therefore Hosea warns Israel and says to them: "Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God."¹

III.7 For the Lord God will do nothing, but He
revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets.

For the Lord God will do nothing etc.⁷ "And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him" (Ex.2.4). R.Isaac said: The whole of this verse is spoken with reference to God. 'And stood', as it is written, "And the Lord came and stood" etc. (1Sam.3.10). 'His sister,' as it is written, "Say unto wisdom, thou art my sister" (Prov.7.4). 'Afar off,' as it is written, "The Lord appeared from afar unto me" (Jer.31.3). 'To know,' as it is written, "For the Lord is a God of knowledge" (1Sam.2.3). 'What,' as it is written, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?" (Deut.10.12). 'Done,' as it is written, "For the Lord God will do nothing" (Amos3.7). 'To him,' as it is written, "And called it Lord is peace" (Judg.6.24).²

A scholar recited before R.Hisda: He who suppresses his prophecy is flogged. R.Hisda asked, But who warned him? Abaye answered: His fellow prophets. But how do they know? Said Abaye: For it is written, "For the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His counsel unto His

1 Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.157. 2 Soṭah, 11a. Cf. Md. ha-Gadol, Exod., p.13; Jer. Soṭah, 17b; Mekilta, 44a; Md. Mishle, 38a. Note. The Palestinian Talmud quotes the verse "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar" (Amos9.1) in place of 1 Sam.3.10. The Mekilta quotes them both and adds a third (Deut.31.14).

* The law requires that one must be warned before he can be flogged.

servants the prophets." But perhaps the Heavenly Court repented thereof? Had they repented, all prophets would have been informed.¹

R. Jose said: When I returned from Jamnia to Lud with the elders, I found R. Eliezer sitting in a baker's shop. Upon seeing me he asked me what new law had been expounded in school to-day. I enumerated to him the various legal decisions that had been voted upon by the majority of the scholars, among which was the decision that Jews residing in Ammon or Moab are obligated to give Ma'aser Ani (the tithe that is given to the poor) in the year of release.* When he heard me mention this legal decision, his eyes filled up with tears and he said, "The counsel of the Lord is with them that fear Him" etc. (Ps. 25.14), and it is also said, "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc.** Go and tell them: Never mind the vote you have taken; I received the tradition from R. Johanan ben Zaccai, who in turn received it from the Zugoth, the Zugoth from the prophets, and the prophets from Moses (Halakah le-Moshe mi-Sinai), to the effect that the people of Ammon and Moab are required to give Ma'aser Ani in the year of release.²

At first God revealed His counsel to those who feared him, as it is said: "The counsel of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. 25.14);

¹ Sanhedrin, 89b.

* Jews residing in Palestine were not required to give the tithe to the poor during the year of release because every one's fields remained fallow during that year. In Ammon and Moab, however, the laws pertaining to the year of release did not obtain; hence the decision to give the tithe to the poor in those countries during the year of release.

** The decision had been revealed to him long before it was taken to a vote at Jamnia.

² Tosefta, Yadayim, II, 7.

then to the upright, as it is said: "In the council of the upright, and in the congregation" (Ps.111.1); finally, to the prophets, as it is said: "But He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets."¹

When the king of Aram took counsel with his servants in regard to the war against Israel and told them where he had decided to establish his camp, the prophet Elisha sent word to the king of Israel, saying: "Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Arameans are coming down" (2Kings 6.9). God does nothing without revealing it first to His servants the prophets, as it is said: "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc.²

"For the Leader. A Psalm of David. Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from the terror of the enemy" (Ps.64.1-2). This is as it is written, "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc. Said R.Taḥlifa: God had revealed to David what they were going to do to Daniel. If they had been able to do any injury to God, they would have done it.³

The vision of the prophets was not unlimited, for it is said: "Neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee" (Isa.64.3). On the other hand, they did see a little, for it is said: "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc.⁴

"And the Lord appeared unto him (Abram) by the terebinths of Mamre" (Gen.18.1). It was in order to inform him what was going to happen to Sodom, as it is written, "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc.⁵

Before God does anything in his world He first reveals it to the righteous, as it is said, "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc. The

1 Tanḥuma, Vayera, 6. Cf. Tanḥuma, Vayehi, 14; Gen.R., 49.

2 Tanḥuma, Tazria, 9. 3 Md. Tehillim, Ps.64.

4 Eccles.R., 1. Cf. Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 228.

5 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 265.

reason he does this is so that they may intercede for the sinners and plead for mercy on their behalf, as it is written, "Then said I: O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee; how shall Jacob stand? for he is small," (Amos 7.5), and immediately afterwards it is said: "The Lord repented concerning this; this also shall not be" (ibid. 7.6).¹

There was not a single thing that God did not reveal/^{to Israel, as} it is said:

"The counsel of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and His covenant, to make them know it" (Ps. 25.14), and as it is also said: "For the Lord God will do nothing" etc.²

For the Lord God will do nothing etc.⁷ This refers to Joseph, as it is said, "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh: 'The dream of Pharaoh is one' etc." (Gen. 41.25). Another interpretation: this refers to Daniel, as it is said, "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night" (Dan. 2.19). Another interpretation: this refers to Moses, as it is said, "And Moses said: 'Thus saith the Lord: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt'" (Exod. 11.4). Another interpretation: this refers to Elisha, as it is said, "Go, say unto him: Thou shalt surely

¹ Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 225.

² Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 18. Cf. Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 23; Md. Tehillim, Ps. 111. Note. According to the passage in Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 23 it was only to the generation of Israelites that had gone out from Egypt that God had revealed everything. This was because the Israelites of the Exodus were more righteous than the Israelites of any other generation.

recover" (2K.8.10). Another interpretation: this refers to Joshua, as it is said, "And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit'" (Num.27.18). Another interpretation: this refers to Elijah, as it is said, "And the Lord said unto him: 'Go return on thy way' etc. (1K.19.15). Another interpretation: this refers to Ahijah, as it is said, "Now the Lord had said unto Ahijah: 'Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to inquire of thee' etc." (1K.14.5). Another interpretation: this refers to Samuel, as it is said, "Now the Lord had revealed unto Samuel" etc. (1Sam.9.15).¹

Both Jacob and Moses matched two against two: Judah against Babylon and Benjamin against Media. Judah was compared to a lion, "Judah lion's whelp" (Gen.49.9), and Babylon was compared to a lion, "The first was like a lion" (Dan.7.4); the kingdom of Babylon fell at the hand of Daniel who was a descendant of Judah. Benjamin was compared to a wolf, "Benjamin is a wolf that raveneth" (Gen.49.27), and Media was compared to a wolf, "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear"* (Dan.7.5); the kingdom of Media fell at the hand of Mordecai who was a descendant of Benjamin.^{2**}

Unto His servants the prophets⁷ The prophets were called servants, as it is said, "But He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets."³

1 Md. Shemuel, 14.

* A wolf and bear were considered identical.

2 Gen. R., 99. Cf. Tanh. ed. Sub., Va'yehi, p. 110.

** God had revealed to Jacob and Moses that Babylon the lion and Media the wolf were going to threaten the existence of Israel. Consequently they matched Judah the lion and Benjamin the wolf against them.

3 Cant. R., 1.

"Moses My servant is dead" (Josh.1.2). There are some who called themselves servant and God also referred to them as servant; there are some who called themselves servant but God did not call them servant; there are some who did not call themselves servant but God called them servantThe early prophets did not call themselves servants but God called them servants, as it is said: "But He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets."¹

Unto His ~~servants the prophets~~ / when the Torah says: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there" (Deut.34.5), it is not in disparagement that the Torah refers to Moses as a servant but rather in praise of him for we find that the early prophets were called servants, as it is said, "But He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets."²

~~III.8~~ III.8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear?

The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

Who can but prophesy? / Targ. Who shall not accept the prophecy?

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? / God is called by seventy names.

Among these are: lion, as it is said, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" former (yo'zer) and creator (bo're), as it is said, "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind" (Amos 4.13).³

Who gave strength and force to the lion? Was it not He? But it is merely that we describe Him by figures known to us from His creations,

1 Sifre, 71a.

2 Sifre, 149b.

3 Md. Zuta, Cant., 1.

so that the ear may get it in accordance with its capacity of hearing.¹

"The lion roareth, and the fierce lion howleth" (Job 4.10). Eliphaz told Job that Israel was going to sin before God who is called a lion, as it is said, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear;" He will deliver them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar who is called a lion, as it is said, "A lion is gone up from his thicket" (Jer.4.7); this will take place in the fifth month* whose sign of the zodiac (constellation) is a lion; He (Nebuchadnezzar) will destroy the temple which is called lion, as it is said: "Ah, Ariel, Ariel" (Isa.29.1)**; and he will rule over Judah which is called lion, as it is said: "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen.49.9).²

"And all the people perceived the thunderings" (Ex.20.15). It was a variety of sounds that the people heard when God revealed himself on Mount Sinai. There was the sound of flames of fire, as it is said: "The voice of the Lord heweth out flames of fire" (Ps.29.7); there was the sound of great waters, as it is said; "Like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty" (Ezek.1.24); there was the sound of the roar of a lion, as it is said, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos3.8). Thus, according to this Midrash, the prophet refers to the time when God descended

1 Mekilta, 65a. Cf. Tanhuma, Jethro, 13; Mishnat R. Eliezer, 114.

* The Midrash mentions Tammuz which is the 4th month but that is an error. In the other Midrashim the fifth month is mentioned.

2 Aggadath Bereshith, 56. Cf. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.116; Pesikta Rabbati, 28.

** A derivation of 'ari' meaning lion.

on Mount Sinai to give Israel the ten commandments.¹

The lion hath roared, who will not fear?⁷ This refers to the Messiah.²

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion" (Prov.19.12). Just as when the lion roars the animals tremble, so it is with God who is compared to a lion, as it is said, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"³

"I am the Lord thy God" (Ex.20.2). It is to this divine utterance that the prophet referred when he said "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" And the people of Israel did fear, for it is said: "And all the people that were in the camp trembled" (Ex.19.16), and the mountain trembled, as it is said: "And the whole mount quaked greatly" (ibid.19.18). All this transpired because God uttered words of life. The thought of this caused the prophet to exclaim, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" Said R. Jeremiah: If when God gives life to the world the earth quakes so, how much more so when He comes to punish the wicked who violate the precepts of the Torah.⁴

R. Simon relates the following parable: A king entered his palace. When the matron heard him coming she trembled as she made way for him. If the matron trembles so, what shall the maids and servants do? Thus when God revealed himself to give the Torah to Israel, they heard His voice and

1 Pesikta Hadeta, Beth ha-Midrash, VI.p.45. Cf. Ex.R.,29.

2 Md. Lekah Tob, Vayehi,49.

3 Aggadoth Bereshith,8.

4 Exod. R.,29.

died, as it is said, "My soul failed me when he spoke" (Song of Songs 5.6). If that was so with Israel, how much more so with the other nations of the world.¹

The question was raised, what caused the earth to quake? The answer is, when God contemplates the places of worship of the heathens and sees how they enjoy rest and peace there and then sees how His own house is desolate and in the hands of ^{the} uncircumcised, He becomes envious, as it were, and begins to roar, and immediately heaven and earth begin to quake.²

The temple, the kingdom of the house of David, Israel, and Nebuchadnezzar are all referred to as lion. When God saw that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple, took away the kingdom from the house of David and drove Israel into exile, he said: "Where is the den of the lions?" (Nahum 2.12) Where are My children? It was then that he roared.³

This refers to the time when God asked Israel whether they are willing to accept the ten commandments. They replied that they were.⁴

The prophets guarded their words well and were extremely careful about every word that they uttered. When Amos said "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" he did not compare the voice of God to the roaring of a single lion but to that of all the lions in the world combined.⁵

1 Ibid. 2 Ibid. 3 Ibid. 4 Ibid.
 * The Hebrew for a single lion would be ari; aryeh denotes the entire species of lions--Binyan Yehoshua.

5 Aboth de R. Nathan, II.6. Cf. Md. Mishle, 44b.

The Roman emperor said to R.Joshua b.Hananiah: What is so remarkable about the fact that your God has been compared to a lion, as it is said: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?"--a strong man can kill a lion. R.Joshua replied that the prophet had not compared God to an ordinary lion but to a particular lion whose habitation is in the jungle of Be Ila-i. The emperor expressed a desire to see this lion but the rabbi advised him against it. When the emperor insisted, however, the rabbi had no alternative but to acquiesce. They started out for the jungle and when they were still three hundred perasoth* away, the lion suddenly let out a tremendous roar. The emperor was so startled that he fell to the ground and begged R.Joshua to take him back home.¹

When one sees a mountain in his dream, upon rising he should immediately recite the verse: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings" (Isa.52.7). This he should do before another verse containing the word mountain, gets ahead of him, "For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing" (Jer.9.9). . . . When he sees a lion in his dream, he should upon rising immediately recite the verse, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" This he should do before another verse containing the word lion gets ahead of him, "A lion is gone up from his thicket" (Jer.4.7).^{**2}

The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy! The reference is to the time when God gave the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. R.Abuhu said in

* Persian miles.

1 Hullin, 59b.

** The recitation of the verse is a form of incantation and will protect him from harm.

2 Berakoth, 56b.

the name of R.Johanan: When God gave the Torah, the birds did not chirp, the fowl did not flutter, the oxen did not bellow, the Ophanim* did not fly, the Seraphim* recited no hymns, the sea did not move, the people did not speak, the entire world was wrapped up in utter silence. Then came forth the sound proclaiming the words, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod.20).¹

III.10 For they know not to do right, saith the
the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their
palaces.

For they know not to do right etc.⁷ According to R.Tanhuma the reference is to the judges of Jerusalem. They were not able to administer justice because of the bribes that they accepted and because of their robbery.²

III.11 Therefore thus saith the Lord God: An
adversary, even round about the land! And he shall
bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces
shall be spoiled.

An adversary, even round about the land etc.⁷ Targ. There will be severe distress in the land and your strength will disappear from you.

III.12 Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd rescueth
out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of
an ear, so shall the children of Israel that dwell in
Samaria escape with the corner of a couch, and the leg
of a bed.

* Name of angels.

1 Exod.R.,29.

2 Yalkut ha-Makiri, Amos, p.28.

With the corner of a couch etc.⁷ Targ. By the power of rulership and they put their trust in Damascus. Rashi explains it as follows: The people of Samaria escaped as a result of the power of Jeroboam's rulership who succeeded in restoring the border of Israel. The power of Jeroboam is referred to as the corner of a couch because the corner is the strongest part of the couch. Amos prophesied, however, that ultimately they are going to lean upon the kings of Syria to help them as they actually did in the days of Pekah the son of Remaliah who made an alliance with Rezin the king of Aram. Thus they lay their main trust upon Damascus.

As the shepherd rescueth etc.⁷ "If it be torn in pieces, let him bring it for witness" (Ex.22.12). R.Josiah says that this refers to the skin. Although there is no explicit proof for this, there is a suggestion of it in the passage: "Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear".¹ R.Josiah conveys the thought that although the shepherd is well aware that he cannot save the life of the sheep or goat he, nevertheless, makes a special effort to snatch at least some part of the animal in order that he may be able to produce it as evidence that it has been torn and thus acquit himself of all blame.

With the corner of a couch⁷ We gather from here that of the ten tribes God permitted only one person out of eight to remain in the land, as it is said: "With the corner of a couch."* The rest of the people were in Damascus in order to fulfil the words, "Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus" etc. (Amos 5.27).²

1 Mekilta, 93a.

* A couch has two ends, two sides, and four legs, thus making a total of eight parts.

2 Seder Olam Rabba, 22. Cf. Md. Zuta, 1; Md. Eser Galuyyoth, Beth ha-Midrash, IV, p.133

III.14 For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also punish the altars of Beth-el, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

The altars of Beth-el⁷ Targ. Those who worship upon the heathen altars of Beth-el.

III.15 And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.

Houses of ivory⁷ Targ. Houses inlaid with ivory.

And I will smite the winter-house etc.⁷ "And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria" (2K.10.1). R.Hoshaiah said: Just as he had seventy sons in samaria, so he had seventy sons in Jezreel, and each one of them had two residences, one for the summer and one for the winter, as it is written, "And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house." R.Judah b.Simon said: They each had two for the summer and two others, for the winter, as it is said: "And the houses of ivory shall perish". Other Rabbis said that they each had six, as it is said, "And the great houses shall have an end".*¹

* Houses implies at least two more.

** The additional use of the word houses implies at least two more.

1 Eccles. R.,6. Cf. Esther R.,1; Md. Shemuel,2.

Rabba affirmed that according to R. Judah any house which is not intended for both summer and winter is not to be regarded as a house and consequently does not require a mezuzah* on the door-post. Abaye then asked: Is it not written, "And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house?" Rabba replied: It may be called a winter-house or a summer-house, but it is never referred to simply as house.¹

And I will smite the winter-house etc.⁷ God created twenty-four good things in His world and all of them were destroyed. In the future, however, God will give them back to Israel. Included among these was one for the ten tribes in that they drank "wine in bowls" (Amos 6.6), and not only that, but in the months of Tebet, Shebat, and Adar they would decorate their homes with cedar wood; in Nisan, Iyar and Sivan they would decorate their homes with glassware; in Tammuz, Ab, and Ellul they occupied houses that were made of marble; in Tishri, Hesban, and Kislev they lived in houses that were made of ivory. Because they sinned, however, all of these were destroyed, as it is said: "And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish" etc. In the Messianic future, however, God will restore them to Israel, as it is said: "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down. . . .so will I watch over them to build

* A slip of parchment containing an inscription from Deut. 6.4-9; 11.13-21, enclosed in a small case and affixed to the door-post of every Jewish home.

1 Yoma, 10a.

and to plant, saith the Lord" (Jer.31.28).¹

IV.1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are
in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor,
that crush the needy, that say unto their lords:

'Bring that we may feast.'

Ye kine of Bashan/ Targ. You who are rich in property.

Bring, that we may feast/ Targ. Give us the power that we may plunder.

Here this word, ye kine of Bashan, etc./ Locusts and famine come as a
result of the sin of pillage, as it is said: "Hear this word, ye kine
of Bashan,that oppress the poor, that crush the needy" (Amos 4.1),
and as it is further said, "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew;
the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and
your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured" (Amos 4.9), and as it is
also said: "That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten"
etc. (Joel 1.4).²

The prophecies of Amos contained words of reproach, as it is said,

"Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan."³

According to the Talmud the prophet is here referring to the women,⁴
but according to the Midrash the reference is to the courts of justice.⁵

1 Seder Arakim, Otzar Midrashim, p.71.

2 Shabbath, 32b.

3 Sifre, 64a.

4 Shabbath, 32b.

5 Sifre, 64a.

Because Moses opened his final message to Israel with harsh words (Deut.32.24), he closed with words of comfort (Deut.33.1), and all the prophets followed his example. . . . Thus Amos first said: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan" etc., but later he spoke to them words of comfort, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen . . . Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper" etc. (Amos9.11-13).¹

IV.2 The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness: lo,
surely the days shall come upon you, that ye shall be
taken away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks.

That ye shall be taken away etc.⁷ Targ. And the nations will take you away on their shields and your children in fisher-boats.

The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness etc.⁷ God said to Noah: "And the waters shall no more become a flood" (Gen.9.15). Isaiah interpreted that to mean that God had sworn to Noah to that effect, as it is written: "For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth" (Isa.54.9), and God has fulfilled His words even unto the present. Surely, then, God will fulfil His words in the three instances in which He has expressly sworn to Israel. These are: (1) "So have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Isa.54.9); (2) "The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness" etc.; (3) "The Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength" (Isa.62.8).²

1 Sifre, 141b.

2 Tanhuma, Noah, 11.

And your residue with fish-hooks⁷ Our Rabbis taught: He who sells a ship sells with it its wooden implements* and its tank of water. R. Nathan says: He who sells a ship sells with it its bugith** (dyke-boat). Symmachus says: He who sells a ship sells with it its dugith*** (fisher-boat). Raba said: Bugith and dugith are the same; R. Nathan, the Babylonian called it bugith, while Symmachus, who was a Palestinian, called it dugith, for so it is written, "And your residue (shall be taken away) in fisher-boats (be'siroth duga).¹

IV.3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall be cast into Harmon, saith the Lord.

And ye shall go out etc⁷ Targ. They will break the wall upon them and cast you out all together, one against the other, and they shall carry you captive ~~to~~ beyond the mountains of Harmin (Hurmini).****

And ye shall go out at the breaches⁷ "Whose oxen are well laden (alufenu mesubalim); with no breach, and no going forth" etc. (Ps.144.14). When the leaders treat the people with understanding****, then there is no breach of exile, as it is written, "And ye shall go out at the breaches" and no going forth into exile, as it is written, "Cast them out of My

* Viz., its oars, ladders, etc.

** From the Heb. be'gah; egg shaped, oval, which is attached to the bigger ship and into which passengers disembark on approaching the shallow water.

*** From the Heb. doog, to fish.

¹ Baba Bathra, 73a.

**** Probably a province of Armenia--Jastrow.

***** The Rabbis interpret aluf as prince or leader and not as cattle, and sabal, to bear, in the sense of to be of understanding or tolerant.

sight, and let them go forth" (Jer.15.1), and no cry of exile, as it is written, "Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people" (Jer.3.19), and as it is also written, "And the cry of Jerusalem is gone up" (Jer.14.3).¹

"There is a time to plant" (Eccles.3.2), as it is said, "And I will plant them upon their land" (Amos 9.15); . . . "There is a time to break down," (Eccles.3.3) as it is written, "And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her"; "And a time to build up" (Eccles.3.3), as it is written, "And I will build it as in the days of old" (Amos 9.11).²

IV.4-5 Come to Beth-el, and transgress, to Gilgal,
and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices
in the morning, and your tithes after three days; and
offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is
leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish
them; for so ye love to do, O ye children of Israel,
saith the Lord God.

And offer a sacrifice etc.⁷ Targ. And they take the sacrifice of thanksgiving from oppression ~~xxx~~ and offer it with song and say that it is acceptable.

And bring your sacrifices in the morning etc.⁷ According to the law laid down in the Mishnah, three days prior to a heathen festival the Jew is

1 Ruth R., 1. 2 Eccles. R., 3. Cf. Md. Zuta, Eccles., 3; Ginzei Schechter, I, p. 170
~~xxx Rashi explains that according to Targum Jonathan is a derivation of banay, a~~
~~person who is robbed or oppressed as in Gen. 1. 17. banay banay which all~~
~~ancient version render banay and is therefore translated passively,~~
~~relieve the oppressed xxx~~

prohibited to transact any business with a heathen, nor is he permitted to loan him any money or borrow money from him. The reason for the prohibition is that on the day of his festival the heathen offers thanksgiving to his gods for all these monetary transactions. Any one transacting business with a heathen shortly before a heathen festival therefore becomes indirectly a partner to heathen worship. R. Hama bar Ukvah affirms that this three day ban is based upon the words of Amos, "And bring your sacrifices in the morning, and your tithes after three days". R. Yese says that this verse refers to the kingdom of Jeroboam. When Jeroboam became king he began to persuade the Israelites to worship strange gods. "Come, let us serve the heathen deity", he said, "because the heathen deity is benevolent." The Torah says: "The fat of My feast shall not remain all night until the morning" (Ex.23.18), but the heathen deity says: "And bring your sacrifices in the morning"; the Torah says: "It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow (Lev.19.6), but the heathen deity says: "And your tithes for three days"; the Torah says: "Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread" (Ex.23.18), but the heathen deity says: "And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened"; the Torah says: "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it" (Deut. 23.22), but the heathen deity says: "And proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them."^{*1}

* The implication is that it does not matter when they are brought.
 1 Jer. Aboda Zara, 39a.

IV.6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth
in all your cities, and want of bread in all your
places; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the
Lord.

Cleanness of teeth⁷ Targ. Bluntness of teeth (perplexity).

Yet have ye not returned unto Me⁷ Targ. Unto my service.

And I also have given you cleanness of teeth etc.⁷ R.Hinana said in the
name of Rab: When a man's teeth are gone (i.e. when he has reached old
age), his chances of earning a livelihood are reduced, as it is said:

"And I also have given cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want
of bread in all your places."¹

IV.7 And I also have withholden the rain from you,
when there were yet three months to the harvest; and
I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not
to rain upon another city; one piece was rained upon,
and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

And I caused it to rain upon one city etc.⁷ According to R.Judah the curse
was not only upon the city that received no rain but also upon the city
that did receive rain for the city that was rained upon received too much
rain. R.Ashi says that this interpretation of R.Judah is based upon the
word 'timater' which means that the city shall become drenched with rain.²

1 Midda, 65a.

2 Ta'anith, 6b.

If no rain has fallen upon a city, the Shofar should be sounded* and a fast declared, as it is written, "And I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city" etc.¹ Thus the lack of rain upon a city is regarded as a curse.

The Talmud describes what is going to take place each year during the seven year period prior to the coming of the son of David (The Messiah). The first year the following verse will be fulfilled: "And I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city".² Thus the first sign of the coming of the Messiah will be famine in one city whilst there is plenty in another city.

IV.9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew;
the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and
your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-
worm devoured; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith
the Lord.

See commentary on 4.1 p.90.

IV.11 I have overthrown some of you, as God over-
threw Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand
plucked out of the burning; yet I have ye not
returned unto Me, saith the Lord.

* Calling the people to penitence.

1 Ta'amith, 18b. Cf. Jer. Ta'anith, 66c.

2 Sanhedrin, 97a. Cf. Cant. R., 2; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.51; Seder Eliyyahu Zuta, 16.

I have overthrown etc.⁷ Targ. I have rejected you as God has rejected Sodom and Gomorrah.

IV.12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, I Israel;
because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy
God, O Israel.

Therefore thus will I do etc.⁷ Targ. Therefore what shall I do unto you, O Israel; because you have not returned to the Law this I shall do unto you, prepare to receive the instruction of the Law of your God O Israel. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; because (ekeb) I will etc.⁷ Israel said to God: When will you reward us for the precepts that we fulfil? God replied: Of the fruit of the precepts you will eat at once, but the reward of them I shall give you in ekeb (the days of the Messiah), as it is said, "And it shall come to pass, because (ekeb) ye hearken to these ordinances" etc. (Deut.7.12). . . . Said R.Aba: God swore that he would not forsake Israel for ever, for it is said, "Therefore (la'hen) thus will I do unto thee, O Israel" and la'hen (therefore) always implies an oath, as it is said, "And therefore (la'hen) I have sworn unto the house of Eli" (1Sam.3.14).^{*} I shall punish you only until ekeb (i.e. until the days of the Messiah), "because (ekeb) I will do this unto thee" until you fulfil my precepts up to the ekeb (the days of the Messiah).^{**1}

* The principle of Gezerah Shawah (analogy of expressions) is here employed.

** Only until the days of the Messiah will God punish Israel for her sins but not beyond that point.

1 Deut.2.,3.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.¹ Before one recites his prayers he should first ease himself (attend to his bodily needs), as it is said "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."¹

One must not pray unless he is wearing his sash, as it is written, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Raba bar R. Huna always put stockings on before saying his prayers, for he said: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." R. Ashi said: I have observed R. Kahana, when there is misfortune in the world he always removes his mantle, folds his hands (as a sign of mourning), and prays as a slave before his master. When the world is enjoying peace, however, he first wraps himself up in his clothes and then prays, for he said: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."²

R. Simon says: Concentrate your mind as you go to meet thy God, O Israel.³

In the days of the Talmud the belief was current that anything which one does in pairs (zugoth) would lead to misfortune. Thus he who leaves his table after having drunk even numbers of cups, will be harmed by demons. Consequently, he who drinks even numbers of cups is not to recite the usual prayer over its contents, for it is said: Prepare to meet thy God,⁴ and he did not prepare.

1 Tosefta, Berakoth, II, 19. Cf. Berakoth, 23a; Jer. Berakoth, 4d; Jer. Megillah, 71c; Eccles. R., 4.

2 Shabbath, 19a.

3 Jer. Megillah, 71c.

~~xxxx Simon interprets it as though the word hikon was not a derivation of kasan, to prepare, but rather of hika vain, to open, intend.~~

4 Berakoth, 51b.

* R. Simon associates "hikon" with the Rabbinic word kawanah, intention, concentration of mind.

IV.13 For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; the Lord, thy God of hosts, is His name.

For, lo, He that formeth etc.] Targ. For He that forms the mountains, and creates the wind reveals Himself to make known to man what is His work, to establish light for the righteous as the light of morning, who goes and establishes to bring darkness to the wicked, to break the wicked of the earth; the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name.

He that formeth the mountains, etc.] See commentary on Amos 3.8, p.81. It is from this verse that the Rabbis learned that Amos spoke harsh words for the words in this verse are, according to the Rabbis, among his mildest ones and even they are severe.

What is the connection between wind and mountains? Amos said to Israel: These mountains are dependent for their existence upon the wind, and when those who inhabit them provoke God, He orders the wind to overthrow the mountains. Beware, lest you provoke Him and He do thus to you.

Another interpretation--Amos said to Israel: When the wind goes forth from God He diminishes its strength by directing it first against the mountains and hills before sending it to regions that are inhabited in order that it may not do any harm to the people, as it is said: "When He maketh a weight for the wind" (Job 28.25). Beware, lest you provoke Him and He send the wind forth without restraint and the world meet with destruction, as it is said: "For He looketh to the ends of the earth" (Job 28.24).

Another interpretation--Amos said to Israel: If when you were standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, and God revealed Himself to you in order to give you the Torah, you were so overwhelmed by His presence that your wind left you, how will you be able to bear His presence when you provoke Him and He reveals Himself to you in wrath, and thus it is said: "For the Lord will rise up as in mount Perazim" (Isa.28.21)?

Another interpretation--Amos said to Israel: Upon whose merit are you depending for mercy? Is it not upon the merit of the patriarchs and that of the prophets? Mountains refers to the patriarchs, as it is said, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn" (Isa.51.1); wind refers to the prophets, as it is said, "And My spirit abideth among you; fear ye not" (Haggai 2.5). You shall know that God created them and it is He who formed them, and they will not profane Him for your sake. When ^{the} Israelites heard this, they said: "For Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us," (Isa.63.16).¹

A Sadducee once said to R.Judah the Prince: He who formed the mountains did not create the wind, and He who created the wind did not form the mountains, for it is written: "for, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and (He that) createth the wind". R.Judah replied: You fool! look at the end of the verse which reads: "The Lord, the God of hosts, is His name."* The Sadducee said: Allow me three days in which to answer you. R.Judah fasted for three days (lest the Sadducee find an answer). When he finally sat down to eat he was told that there is a Sadducee at the door who wishes

1 Mishnat R.Elizer,3.

* The singular form is used.

to see him. Upon hearing this he said: "Yea, they put poison into my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps.69.22). When the Sadducee entered he said: Rabbi, I bring you happy tidings; Your enemy found no answer and jumped off the roof and died.*1

A philosopher said to R.Gamliel: Your God is a great artist but he found good material (dyes) such as 'waste,' 'voidness,' 'darkness,' 'wind,' 'water,' and 'depths' that helped him create the world.** R.Gamliel replied: Concerning all of these it is written that they, too, have been created. . . .Of the wind it is said: "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind"2.

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num.6.26). R.Hananiah said: Peace is something great for it is put on a par with all the works of creation, as it is said: "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind", "I make peace, and create evil" (Isa.45.7).3

R.Meir states that if the embryo which a woman has miscarried has the form of a beast, animal, or fowl, she shall observe her days of impurity in precisely the same manner as when she gives birth to a child. According to R.Judah and R.Hiya, R.Meir's reason for this strange law is that the same word *yetzirah* (formation) is used in the account of the creation of beast and fowl as in the account of the creation of man.***

* It was another Sadducee who came to bring the news.

1 Mullin, 87a. Cf. Sanhedrin, 39a.

** The philosopher thereby denied one of the cardinal teachings of Judaism, namely, *creatio ex nihilo*.

2 Gen.R.1. 3 Sifre, 13a.

*** Cf. Gen.2.19 and Gen.2.7 Note. The principle of Gezerah Shawah (the analogy of expressions) is here employed.

If that be the case, said R. Ami, when the embryo takes on the form of a mountain, the mother should also observe the days of impurity, as it is said: "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind". R. Hiva replied: The embryo never takes on the form of a mountain.¹

R. Yosa said: Woe unto those people who see and yet know not what they see, who stand but know not what they stand on. The earth rests upon the pillars, as it is said: "Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble" (Job 9.6); the pillars rest upon the water, as it is said: "To Him that spread forth the earth above the waters" (Ps. 136.6); the water rests upon the mountains, as it is said: "The waters stood above the mountains" (Ps. 104.6); the mountains rest upon the wind, as it is said: "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind"; . . . the stone is dependent upon the arm of God, as it is said: "And underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33.27).²

There are several verses in Scripture which caused R. Hiva³ to weep everytime he attempted to interpret them. One of these was the verse, "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains" etc. R. Huna said: Because the words "and declareth unto man what is his thought" follow immediately

¹ Nidda, 23a. Cf. Jer. Nidda, 50c.

² The fact that 'mountains' and 'wind' are mentioned together, though there is no apparent connection between them, teaches us that the mountains rest upon the wind--Rashi.

³ Ultimately everything rests upon the will of God--Massorath ha-Shas.

² Hagigah, 12b. Cf. Jer. Hagigah, 77a; Md. Tehillim, Ps. 136.

³ In most sources R. Judah the Prince is mentioned.

the words "and createth the wind," shows that before he died God will recall to man even those words that he uttered during his lifetime which have no more substance in them than the wind. R. Huna also interpreted the verse as follows: Because the words "and declareth unto man what is his thought" come immediately before the words "that maketh the morning darkness," shows that God will remind man even of the words of darkness (i.e. words of no importance) which he spoke during his span of life. Even the idle conversation in which he engages with his wife when he cohabits with her is recorded in the book by Him who "maketh the morning darkness" and is then read to him as he lies on his dying bed."

Another verse that caused him to weep was "Hate the evil, and love the good, . . . it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5.15). So much is being asked of man and still the prophet is doubtful and says "It may be that the Lord. . . will be gracious" etc.¹

For, lo, He that formeth the mountains etc.⁷ The entire world is not large enough to contain God, as it is said, "For the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1K.8.27). His voice hews out flames of fire; He removes mountains and breaks rocks into pieces; His bow is made of fire, His arrows and His wind, of flames of fire; the clouds are His shield, the lightning His sword; He forms the mountains and the hills and creates the wind, as it is written, "For, lo, He that formeth the

* He wept because God was going to be so severe on the day of judgment. Note. We have here an example of the principle of interpretation known as *semukin*, contiguous passages.

1 Lev. R., 26. Cf. Lam. R., 3; Eccles. R., 12; Tanhuma, Emor, 2; Ginzei Schechter, I, p. 175; Md. Shemuel, 24; Md. Alpha Beta de R. Akiba, Beth ha-Midrash, III, p. 38; Kalla Rabbati, 3.

mountains, and createth the wind".¹

And createth the wind/ Though the imperfect tense is used here, the reference is to the original act of creation and is to be interpreted as though it were written bare (created) instead of bo're.²

As R. Ila was climbing the steps of the house of Rabeh b. Shilah he overheard a child reciting the words: "For, lo, He that formeth the mountains" etc. Said R. Ila: A slave whose master speaks to him openly about some of the things that he has said is not in a hopeless condition. What is meant by "ma siho?" Rav said: At the time of death one is even reminded of the superfluous conversation which he had with his wife.³

One should take heed not to indulge too much in laughter, in idle talk, and in frivolity. God says to him: My son, why do you not follow the example of your Father in heaven who sits on His throne and devotes one third of the day to the study of the Law, one third in which to judge mankind, and one third in which to practise charity and feed his creatures; only a very short time does he devote to laughter (sport). If one tells God that he has been studying the Torah ever since he was thirteen years old, God replies to him: How much Torah have you studied and what good deeds have you done? Have you not indulged in idle talk and in matters that are improper and unworthy, as it is said: "For, lo, He that formeth . . . and declareth unto man what is his thought?"⁴

1 Pesikta Hadeta, Beth ha-Midrash, VI, p. 65.

2 Berakoth, 52b.

3 Hagigah, 5b.

4 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 13.

And declareth unto man etc.⁷ Amos uttered this verse as an expression of God's majesty and greatness, for as soon as God decides that He is going to create some one, He immediately determines how much speech that individual shall utter, and thus David said: "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether" (Ps.139.4).¹

"For now I know that thou art a God-fearing man" (Gen.22.12). Is it possible that previously God did not know this? Is it not written: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done" (Isa.46.10), and is it not also written: "And declareth unto man what is his thought?" Therefore, do not read "I know" (Yadati), but "I make known" (Yidati); all the people in the world will now know how far-reaching is the fear of heaven, even to the point where one is willing to slay his own son, his only son, whom he loves.²

When Joseph made himself known to his brothers, they were not able to answer him, "for they were affrighted at his presence" (Gen.45.3). Said R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon in the name of R. Eliezer b. Azariah: If when Joseph said to his brothers: "I am Joseph," they were rendered speechless even though they knew what they had done to him; when God will come on the day of judgment to judge each one of the people and tell him concerning his deeds, as it is written: "And declareth unto man what is his thought," how much more certain that no one will be able to survive the ordeal.³

1 Md. ha-Gadol, Exod., p.60.

2 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 323.

* The principle of interpretation employed here is the inference from minor and major.

3 Tanhuma, ed. Bub, Wayizash, p.104. Cf. Beth ha-Midrash, VI, p.98.

And treadeth upon the high places of the earth⁷ "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap" (Ps.33.7). When God created His world he asked the prince (angel) of the sea to open his mouth and consume all the water that filled the universe. When the angel protested and began to weep, God killed him, as it is said, "He stirreth up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through Rahab" (Job 26.12).^{*} God Himself then pressed the water down and the sea received it, as it is said, "And treadeth upon the high places of the earth."¹

V.1 Hear ye this word which I take up for a
lamentation over you, O house of Israel.

When the Israelites began to violate the precepts of the Torah Jeremiah began to take up a dirge against them: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider ye, and call for the mourning women" (Jer.9.16). R.Simeon b. Lakish said: The situation may be compared to that of a king who had two sons. He became angry at one of them, took a staff, beat him with it until he died. The king then mourned the death of his son. Some time later he became angry at his other son; he took a staff, struck him with it and killed him. This time the king said: "I have no strength to lament over both of them; call in the professional mourners that they may lament over them. Similarly, when the ten tribes were driven into exile, God began to mourn for them: "Hear ye this word which

^{*} Rahab, according to the Midrash, was the name of the angel of the sea.
1. Num.R., 18. Cf. Tanhuma, Hukath, 1; Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Hukath, p.49a-b.

I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel". But when the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were also exiled, God, as it were, declared: "From now on I no longer have any strength to mourn for them." This is as it is said: "Call for the mourning women. . .and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us" (Jer.9.16-17).¹

V.2 The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise, she is cast down upon her land, there is none to raise her up.

The virgin of Israel is fallen etc.⁷ Targ. The congregation of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise this year; she is abandoned upon the ground, there is none to raise her up.

The virgin of Israel is fallen etc.⁷ R. Johanan says: The letter 'nun' is omitted from the "Ashre" (Ps.145)* because this letter introduces a verse which speaks of the fall of Israel, as it is written, "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise."** In Palestine the verse was interpreted as follows: She has fallen, but she will not fall again; arise O virgin of Israel! The concept that the fall of Israel is not to be permanent is suggested in the very next verse of the psalm: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall (Ps.145.14).²

Why are the hands of the 'Nun' turned backward whereas its legs and face are turned toward the 'Mem.'*** It is in order to give the appearance

¹ Intro. to Lament. R.,2. Cf. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 120.

* The psalm is written according to the letters of the alphabet.

***The verse begins with the word nafila (she has fallen), the first letter of which is 'nun'. 2 Berakoth, 4b.

***One of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

of one who is fallen and petitioning to be raised up, as it is said, "She is fallen, she shall no more rise," and as it is also said, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos9.11).¹

R.Aba b. Kahana said: When God sent the prophets to go and comfort Jerusalem, Hosea went and said to the Israelites: "God has sent me to comfort you." They said to him, "What words of comfort have you to offer us?" Hosea replied: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily" (Hosea14.6). They said: "Yesterday you told us 'Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up' (Hosea9.16), to-day you tell us differently; which of the two shall we believe?" When they asked Amos what words of comfort he had for them, he said: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (9.11). They said to him: "Yesterday you told us 'The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise'; which shall we believe?". . . The prophets returned to God and told Him that the Israelites declined to accept their words of comfort. God said to them: "Come, I will go with you and together we shall comfort them." This is as it is said: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people' (Isa.40.1).²

All the prophets who censured Israel warned her that she was going to fall. Jeremiah said: "Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery places in the darkness, they shall be thrust and fall therein" (23.12); Amos said: "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise". Only Hosea spoke of Israel not as falling but only as stumbling, as it is said: "For thou hast stumbled in thine iniquity" (14.2).³

1 Md. Alpha Beta de R. Akiba, Beth ha-Midrash, vol.3, p.57.

2 Md. Zuta, Lament. second recension Cf. Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 127; Pesikta Rabbati, 30.

3 Pesikta Rabbati, 45.

V.3 For thus saith the Lord God: The city that
 went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left,
 and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten
 left, of the house of Israel.

The city that went forth a thousand etc.¹ When the children of Israel
 obey the will of God they will be as numerous "as the sand of the sea,
 which cannot be measured nor numbered" (Hosea 2.1); but when they do not
 obey His will, then "one thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one. . .
 till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain and as an ensign
 on a hill" (Isa. 30.17), and as it is also said: "The city that went forth
 a thousand etc."¹

V.4 For thus saith the Lord unto the house of
 Israel: Seek ye Me, and live.

Seek ye Me, and live¹ Targ. Seek the fear of Me and live.

See commentary on Amos 3.6, pp. 75-76.

Seek ye Me, and live¹ R. Simlai expounded: Six hundred and thirteen precepts
 were given to Moses. David came and reduced them all to eleven (principles)
 (Ps. 15); Isaiah came and reduced them to six (33.15); Micah came and re-
 duced them to three (6.8); Isaiah reduced them still further to two (56.1);
 Amos came and reduced them to one, as it is said, "For thus saith the Lord

¹ Sifre, 83b.

unto the house of Israel: Seek ye Me, and live". R. Nachman b. Isaac asked: "Perhaps the verse means, Seek Me in all the commandments of the Torah." But it was Habakkuk who came and reduced them to one, as it is said: "But the righteous shall live by his faith" (2.4).¹

"His mouth is most sweet" (Song of Songs 5.16). This refers to God. See what it says: "For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel: 'Seek ye Me, and live,' " Is there a mouth sweeter than this? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" etc. (Ezek.33.11). And is there a mouth that is sweeter than this? "And when the wicked turneth from his wickedness" etc. (ibid. 33.19). There is no mouth sweeter than this (i.e. there is nothing more persuasive than this).²

V.5 But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into
Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal
shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el
shall come to nought.

For Gilgal shall etc.] Targ. For those who are in Gilgal etc.
And Beth-el shall come to nought] Targ. And those who worship idols in
Beth-el shall come to nought.

V.6 Seek the Lord, and live--lest He break out
like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour,
and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

1 Makkoth, 24a. Cf. Tanhuma, Shoftim, 9, and Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Shoftim, p.16b, where in place of Isaiah it says, Amos came and reduced them to two. Cf. also Md. Tehillim, Ps.17, according to which version both Amos and Habakkuk reduced them to one.

2 Num.R., 10. Cf. Cant.R., 6.

Seek the Lord etc.] Targ. Seek the fear of the Lord and live, lest His anger be kindled like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour and there be no mercy because of the sins, in that they worshipped to the idols in Beth-el.

V.8 Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and
 4 bringeth on the shadow of death in the morning, and
 darkeneth the day into night; that calleth for the
 waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the
 face of the earth; the Lord is His name.

Him that maketh etc.] Targ. They abandon the fear of Him who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns darkness into light and darkens the day and the night, who commanded to collect armies as numerous as the waters of the sea, and scatters them upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name.

See commentary on Amos 3.2, p. 72.

Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion] In Job 9.9 Pleiades and Orion are mentioned in reverse order. This shows that one is not superior to the other. If it were not for the heat that is produced by Orion the world would not be able to exist because of the cold that is produced by Pleiades and vice versa. R. Samuel explains that Pleiades is called Kimah because it has about a hundred (ke'me-ah)* stars. When God wished to

* Me-ah in Hebrew is a hundred.

bring a deluge upon the world, he did it by taking two stars from Kimah; when he wished to stop it, he did it by taking two stars from Bear.¹

And bringeth on the shadow of death in the morning etc.⁷ "And the Lord said unto him (Moses): 'Go, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee'" (Exod.19.24). Moses had not gone down yet when God already revealed Himself, as it is said, "So Moses went down unto the people" (ibid.19.25), and immediately "God spoke all these words, saying" (ibid.20.1). This is because He does everything simultaneously. He ordains death and restores to life simultaneously; He smites and heals simultaneously. . . .And thus it is said, "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil" (Isa.45.7). All these things are done simultaneously. Similarly, dust becomes converted into man and man becomes converted into dust, as it is said, "And turns the shadow of death into morning;" by that is meant that through death God restores man to his original state (i.e. to dust)." And it is said, "And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood" (Exod.7.20); then the blood was turned back into water. . . .The rod was turned into a serpent; the serpent was turned into a rod. The sea was turned into dry land; the dry land was turned into a sea, as it is said, "That calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name." Therefore, it is said, "God spoke all these words."²

1 Berakoth, 58b. Cf. Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 156.

* Into Eker (morning) is interpreted to mean as he was in the beginning.

2 Exod. R., 28. Cf. Tanhuma, Jerthro, 12.

That calleth for the waters of the sea etc.] This verse is frequently quoted in the Midrashic literature and the predominant opinion appears to be that the prophet here had reference to the generation of Enosh. According to the Rabbis it was in the days of Enosh that the people first began to worship other gods, and they did it in the name of the Lord, as it is said: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen.4.26). In order to punish the people for this God called upon the waters of Okivanus (the Mediterranean Sea) which was higher than the entire world and with it he inundated a third of the world, as it is said, "That calleth for the waters of the sea" etc.¹ These words were uttered twice by the prophet* because the waters of Okivanus arose on two separate occasions in order to flood the world, once in the generation of Enosh when a third of the world was inundated and once in the generation of the tower of Babel when half of the world was submerged.**²

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Micah7.9). The nations of the world said to Israel: "How can you say, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord?' Is it not written: 'Who can stand before His indignation?' (Nahum1.6) If one cannot stand before His agents how can you stand before His indignation? The sea is only God's agent, yet was the generation of Enosh able to stand before it, as it is written, 'That calleth for the waters of the sea' etc."³

1 Mekilta, 67b. Cf. Sifre, 81b; Tanhuma, Noah, 18, Jethro 16; Tanhuma, ed. Pub., Noah, p.26b; Gen.R.,23; Md.Tehillim,Ps.88.

* The second time in 9.6. ** According to one source, one reference is to the generation of Enosh and the other to the Noachian deluge (See Gen.R.,5). According to another source the graves of the wicked were inundated twice, once in the morning and once in the evening. (See Gen.R.,25).

2 Gen.R.,23. See also Jer.Shekalim,50a. 3 Aggadath Bereshith,8.

That calleth for the waters of the sea⁷ Some obey commands and others do not. God said: "I gave Adam a command but he did not do it; I gave the generation of Enosh a command but they provoked Me, as it is said: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen.4.26); I commissioned Okivanus and he did (what I commanded him), as it is said: "That calleth for the waters of the sea" etc.¹

"Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear" (Gen.1.9). R.Yose b. Zimra asked, "Why then is it written: 'That calleth for the waters of the sea' etc? Has it not been said: 'I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it?' etc. (Eccles.3.14)." He replied that God did this in order that the people should fear Him.²

God did all that He wished to do in heaven and on earth. Thus when He wished he said: "Let the waters be gathered together" (Gen.1.9), and when He wished he turned the dry land into a sea, as it is said, "That calleth for the waters of the sea," and when He wished He turned the sea into dry land, as it is said: "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea" (Exod.14.29).³

V.9 That causeth destruction to flash upon the
strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.

That causeth destruction etc.⁷ Targ. Who caused the weak to prevail over

* They worshipped other gods in the name of the Lord.

1. Pesikta Rabbati, 43.

2. Deut. R., 10. Cf. Gen. R., 5.

3. Exod. R., 12. Cf. Exod. R., 23.

the strong and those who are plundered he makes rule over mighty cities. That causeth destruction to flash etc.⁷ There are five examples of the weak casting fear into the hearts of the strong. They are: (1) the fear which the lion has of the Aethiopian gnat; (2) the fear which the elephant has of the yattush*; (3) the fear which the scorpion has of the spider; (4) the fear which the eagle has of the swallow; (5) the fear which the Leviathan has of the kilbith** . R. Judah said in the name of Rab: This is suggested in Scripture by the words: "He who strengthens the plundered against the strong".¹

In the days of Samuel the Israelites would worship heathen deities and then go out to the battlefield and fight against their enemies. After suffering great losses they would come to Samuel and say to him: "Why were we stricken to-day?" Samuel would reply: "You perform wicked acts and yet you murmur against God? You ought to learn from the experience of your forefathers who sent forth an army of twelve thousand men to fight against the Midianites and not a single one of them was killed in battle (Num.31.1-12). And if you will say that you were outnumbered, does not God cause the few to prevail over the many, as it is said: 'He who strengthens the plundered against the strong'.²"

By shod is meant those people who have been plundered and ^{the} weak; by az, is meant those people who are strong and mighty; yet, God grants

* Mosquito or gnat.

1 Shabbath, 77b.

** Name of a small fish, supposed to be stickleback.

2 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 8.

victory to the former over the latter. Moreover, he destroys the strong momentarily, as it is said: "Look away from me that I may strengthen myself" (Ps.39.14).¹

According to legend, among the things that God created during the six days of creation was a worm called Shamir. This worm was able to cut stones with its glance. It was with the aid of the Shamir which cut the stones, that Solomon was able to build the Temple, for no tools of iron were to be employed in its construction (See 1K.6.7). This tiny creature was so powerful that the hardest object could not stand up against it without him splitting it and going right through it. This is as it is written: "He who strengthens the plundered against the strong,"²

V.10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate,
and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

They hate him etc.] Targ. They hate him who reproves them in the gates of the courts regarding decrees of the Law, and towards him who speaks with propriety they are cunning.

They hate him that reproveth in the gate etc.] "And God said unto Noah: 'The end of all flesh is come before Me'" (Gen.6.13). God said: "They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh

1 Ibid, 9.

2 Jer. Sotah, 24b.

uprightly". . . . It is because they were submerged in robbery that they were blotted out from the world, as it is said, "The end of all flesh is come before Me."

V.11 Therefore, because ye trample upon the poor, and take from him exactions of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them, ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

Therefore, because ye trample etc.,] Targ. Therefore because you plunder the wretched and rob the poor.

V.12 For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins; ye that afflict the just, that take a ransom, and that turn aside the needy in the gate.

Ye that afflict the just etc.,] Targ. They afflict the just in order to receive money under false pretenses.

V.13 Therefore the prudent doth keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

Therefore, the prudent etc.,] Targ. Therefore the wise will then be silent before the wicked.

V.15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

See commentary on 4.13, p.103.

R.Ami wept each time he read the following two verses: "Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope" (Lament.3.29); "Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph.2.3). He wept for he said, "So much is demanded of one and yet hope and salvation are uncertain." R.Asi wept each time he read the verse "Hate the evil" etc. for he said: So much is expected of one and still it is doubtful whether he will receive the mercy of God.¹ The remnant of Joseph⁷ The four plants that the Israelites were bidden to take on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Lev.23.40), are symbolic of the four patriarchs and four matriarchs. But are there not only three patriarchs? Joseph, too, was regarded as a patriarch, as it is said, "Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph" (Ps.77.16), and as it is also said, "It may be that the Lord. . . will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." And not only Joseph was so regarded but also his son Ephraim, as it is said: "Is Ephraim a darling son unto Me?" (Jer.31.20).²

Rachel was the chief person of the household because all things revolved around her. It was because of this that she and Israel became synonymous, as it is said, "Rachel weeping for her children" (Jer.31.15).

1 Hagigah, 4b; Cf. Jer. Hagigah, 77a.

2 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 5.

That was true not only of her but also of her son, as it is said, "It may be that the Lord. . . will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." And not only of her son but also of her grandson, as it is said, "Is Ephraim a darling son unto Me?" (Jer.31.20)*¹

R.Jonathan asked, "What is meant by the words, "Behold, I am come this day the first of all the house of Joseph (2Sam.19.21)? The reference is to all of Israel because all of Israel was called by the name Joseph, as it is said, "It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."²

"These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph" (Gen.37.2). God said: In this world the Israelites were redeemed because of the merit of Joseph, and in the Messianic future they will again be redeemed only because of the merit of Joseph, for it is said: "It may be that the Lord. . . will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."³

V.16 Therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts,
the Lord: Lamentation shall be in all the broad places,
and they shall say in all the streets: 'Alas! alas!' and
they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and proclaim
lamentation to such as are skilful of wailing.

R.Berekyia said in the name of R.Abbai: It is written, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, the Lord is the God of hosts"; the name of the Lord

* Joseph and Ephraim are thus used synonymously with Israel.

1 Gen.R., 71. Cf. Ruth R., 7; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.141.

2 Md. Tehillim, Ps.3. Cf. Yalkut, II, 507.

3 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 554.

creates geba'oth (hosts). To this R. Judah b. Simon added that not only His full name is capable of making a gabah (host), but even a single letter of His name can do so just as effectively as His full name.*¹

"And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them" (Gen. 50.21). When God told Isaiah to go and comfort Israel in His name, Isaiah replied: "Whenever I comfort them they say to me, 'How can we accept comfort? Not a single one of the messages of comfort that have been uttered by the prophets has come to pass.' And there is merit in what they say, for when you said to them through Amos, 'Thus saith the Lord: Lamentation shall be in all the broad places' etc., (5.16) that you brought upon them; but when you told them later, 'And I will turn the captivity of My people Israel' (Amos 9.14), that you have not yet accomplished; and so it was with all the prophets etc."²

V.17 And in all vineyards shall be lamentation;
for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith
the Lord.

For I will pass through etc. ⁷ Targ. For I shall reveal myself to bring about the evil dispensation of the law in your midst.

For I will pass through the midst of thee etc. ⁷ "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians" etc. (Exod. 12.23). R. Judah says: As a

* The word geba'oth is divided into two words, gaba and oth, the latter of which means letter. It is possible that we have here a suggestion of the Logos. The principle of interpretation employed here is called Notriken (Breaking up a word into two or more). It is one of the thirty-two principles ascribed to R. Eliezer ben R. Jose and is applied only in the Haggadah.

1 Pesikta Rabbati, 21.

2 Md. ha-Gadol, Gen., 766.

king who passes from place to place. Another interpretation: And God will be angry, He will put His wrath and His terror in Egypt. The word ebrah means only wrath, as it is said, "He sent forth upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath (ebrah), and indignation, and trouble" (Ps.78,49). . . .And it is also written: "And in all vineyards shall be lamentation; for I will get angry in the midst of thee, saith the Lord"¹

V.18 Wee unto you that desire the day of the Lord!

Wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? It

is darkness, and not light.

Wee unto you that desire etc.⁷ Targ. Wee unto you that desire the day that is to come from the Lord! Why would you have the day that is to come from the Lord etc.

Wee unto you that desire the day of the Lord⁷ R.Simlai expounded: What is meant by, "Wee unto you that desire the day of the Lord" etc? This may be compared to a cock and a bat who were eagerly awaiting the light of day. The cock said to the bat, "I look forward to the light, because I have sight; but of what benefit is the light to you?"² Rashi interprets the words of R.Simlai to mean that Israel may well look forward to redemp-

* The word e-ebor is thus interpreted by the Midrash to mean not "I will pass through" but "I will get angry."

1 Mekilta, ed. Lauterbach, Tractate Pisha, 11. Cf. Mekilta de R.Simeon b. Johai, p.13; Md.ha-Gadol, Exod., p.109.

2 Sanhedrin, 98b.

tion for to them the day of the Lord is to be a day of light, but the heathens have no reason to hope for the day of the Lord, for to them it will be a day of darkness and not light.

In the Midrash, too, the thought is expressed that Amos was here addressing himself to the heathens and not to Israel. In the end of days Israel will enjoy light but the portion of the heathens will be only darkness.¹ According to another Midrash the reference is specifically made to the Edomites.²

V.19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; and went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

According to the Talmud Amos was not referring to his own day but to the days of the Messiah. When R.Johanan stated that he did not wish to see the Messiah, R.Simeon b. Lakish asked him: "Why not? Is it because it is written, 'As if a man did flee from a lion' etc. If that be so, I can show you that we experience the same thing in this world. When one goes out into the field and a bailiff meets him, it is as though he had met a lion. When he enters the city and is met by a tax-collector, it is as though he had met a bear. When upon entering his house he finds that his sons and daughters are on the point of starvation, it is as though he were bitten by a serpent." Thus it appears from the words of R.Simeon that the verse in Amos applies to the days of the Messiah and not to his

1 Md. Tehillim, Ps.22.

2 Ibid., Ps.121.

own day.¹

In the Midrashic literature this verse is interpreted allegorically and in various ways. According to one opinion the lion is Babylonia, as it is said, "The first was like a lion" (Dan.7.4); the bear is Media, as it is said: "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear" (Ibid.7.5); "And went into the house," that is the kingdom of the Greeks, in whose day the Temple (the house) was in existence and left unharmed, and by whom the high priest, Simeon the Just, was greatly respected; the serpent is the kingdom of Rome,** as it is said: "The sound thereof shall go like the serpent's"² (Jer.46.22).

Another interpretation: The lion is Nebuchadnezzar; the bear is Belshazzar; the serpent is Haman.³

Another interpretation: The lion is Babylonia, the bear is Media; the serpent is Haman who sought to prevent the rebuilding of the Temple.^{***4}

Another interpretation: The lion is Jaban who pursued Jacob in order to kill him; the bear is Eaan who watched for Jacob on the way as a bear bereaved of children is ready to swoop down upon the mother and her little ones; the serpent is Shechem the son of Hemor who, when Jacob finally returned home to the land of Canaan, violated the chastity of his daughter Dinah (Gen.34).⁵

* It was generally believed that the days immediately preceding the advent of the Messiah would be days of trial and tribulation.

1 Sanhedrin, 98b. ** According to one source, Edom.

2 Md. Tehillim, Ps.18. Cf. Esther R.,1. 3 Esther R.,1.

*** According to the Midrash, Shimshai, the scribe, who wrote the letter to Artaxerxes against Jerusalem (Ezra 4.8) was Haman.

4 Aggadath Esther, 1. Cf. Md. Panim Aherim, 1.

5 Pirke R. Eliezer, 37.38.

V.20 Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness,
and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Shall not the day of the Lord etc.] Targ. Shall not the day that is to
come from the Lord etc.

V.21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take
no delight in your solemn assemblies.

And I will take no delight etc.] Targ. And I shall not accept with
delight the offerings of your assemblies.

I hate, I despise your feasts] ⁱⁿ "Trust ye not/lying words, saying: 'The
temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord'"
(Jer.7.4). Jeremiah repeated this phrase three times in order to warn
the people not to lay their trust upon the festivals which they celebrate
three times a year, for so long as they do not obey the will of God, their
festivals are of no value, and thus it is said: "I hate, I despise your
feasts."¹

V.22 Yea, though ye offer me burnt-offerings and
your meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither
will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.

Neither will I regard etc.] Targ. And the sacrifices of your sanctuaries
will not be acceptable to Me.

1 Mishnat R. Eliezer, I,10.

V.25 Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings
in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings etc.⁷ Rabbi Akiba affirms that sacrifices were offered in the wilderness, for it is expressly stated, "It is a continual burnt-offering, which was offered in mount Sinai" (Num. 28.6).^{*} He answers the objection raised by the above verse in Amos by saying that it was only the tribe of Levi, which had not participated in the worship of the golden calf, that had offered the continual burnt-offering.¹ In other words, the tribes of Israel, with the exception of the tribe of Levi, did not offer sacrifices in the wilderness, not because God did not desire sacrifices, but rather because they were regarded as unworthy of offering them, due to the grave sin which they had committed when they worshipped the golden calf. The Midrash adds that all the congregational sacrifices were offered by the tribe of Levi throughout the forty years that the Israelites were in the wilderness.²

"And they kept the passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month" etc. (Num.9.5). The Torah relates this in a spirit of reproach for this was the only passover that Israel had kept in the wilderness, and thus it is said, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness?"³

"Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness" (Exod.5.1). The feast referred to here included the offering of

* The verse is interpreted differently by R. Eleazar.

1 Hagigah, 6b. Cf. Sifre Zuta, 119a-120a; Sifre, 17a.

2 Sifre Zuta, 119a-120a.

3 Sifre, 17a.

sacrifices. This is derived from the words, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness?" In each verse the word midbar (wilderness) is used. Just as the verse in Amos mentions sacrifices, so here sacrifices are implied.¹

V.27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith He, whose name is the Lord God of Hosts.

See commentary on 3.12 p.87. x

VI.1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!

Woe to them that are at ease etc.] Targ. Woe to those who are unworried, at rest, in Zion, and who trust in the city of Samaria, and determine the name of their sons in accordance with the name of the sons of the nations and of all those by whom the House of Israel is supported.

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion etc.] This refers to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who were wont to recline in amusement halls. "And to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria"--this refers to the ten tribes who dwelt safely in Sebaste.* "The notable men of the first of the nations"--this refers to Israel who are the descendants of Shem and Eber,

¹ Hagigah, 10b.

* Built by Herod on the site of the old Samaria.

which explains the origin of the name Hebrews. "To whom the house of Israel come." When the nations of the world eat and drink they engage in idle conversation. Among the things they say are: "Who is as wise as Balaam? Who is as strong as Goliath? Who is as rich as Haman?" When the Israelites come, they reply to them: "Where not Ahithophel and Solomon wise? Were not Sampson and David strong? Were not Korah and Solomon rich?"* In the end they all agree that the Israelites are right.¹

VI.2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see, and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines; are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?

Pass ye unto Calneh, and see etc.] According to both the Targum and Midrash, Calneh is the city of Ctesiphon, on the eastern bank of the Tigris. Hamath, according to the Midrash, is near Antiochia, ancient capital of Syria.

Then go down to Gath of the Philistines] This refers to the mounds of Philistia.

Are they better than these kingdoms?] By these kingdoms is meant Zion (Judah) and Samaria.

Or is their border greater than your border] God said to Israel: The portion that I have given you is large and good and cannot be surpassed by that of any other nation. Why then do you not obey My will and why are

* The Talmud relates that Korah was fabulously rich (See Pesachim, 119a).
1 Num.R., 10. Cf. Lev.R., 5; Tanhuma, Shemini, 5.

you not apprehensive of the punishment that I will inflict upon you because of your refusal to take my words to heart?¹

VI.3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near.

Ye that put far away etc.,⁷ Targ. They put far away the evil day and you bring violence near in your places of assembly.

Ye that put far away the evil day (yom ra)⁷ "Before the evil days (ye'me ha-ra'a) come" (Eccles.12.1). These are the days of captivity, as it is said, "Ye that put far away the evil day."²

The evil day refers to the day of captivity. The people dispel all thoughts of captivity and assert that no harm will befall them.³

And cause the seat of violence to come near⁷ Hamas (violence) refers to Esau, as it is said, "For the violence done to thy brother Jacob" etc. (Obad.1.10). You have come near in order to seat yourselves next to violence (Esau).⁴

VI.4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall.

1 Num. R.,10. Cf. Lev. R.,5.

* The principle of the Gezerah Shawah (analogy of expressions) is here employed.

2 Eccles. R.,12. 3 Num. R.,10. Cf. Lev.R.,5.

** They follow Esau's mode of life which was characterized by violence.

4 Ibid.

Upon beds of ivory⁷ Targ. Upon beds that are inlaid with ivory.
That lie upon beds of ivory etc.⁷ R. Jose ben R. Hamina said: This refers to people who pass water in front of their beds naked. But R. Abbahu sneered at this and said: "If so, see what is written: 'Therefore now shall they go captive at the heads of them that go captive' (Amos 6.7)--is it possible that because they pass water in front of their beds naked they shall go captive with the first that go captive! But, said R. Abbahu, this refers to people who eat and drink together, join their couches, exchange their wives and make their couches foul* with semen that is not theirs.¹

The ten tribes were driven into captivity because of self-indulgence and sense of ease which they enjoyed, as it is said: "That lie upon beds of ivory" etc.; "that drink wine in bowls" etc. (6.6)--"therefore now shall they go captive at the head of them that go captive" (6.7).²

And eat the lambs out of the flock etc.⁷ "With fat of lambs and rams" (Deut. 32.14). This refers to the days of the ten tribes, as it is said: "And eat the lambs out of the flock" etc.³ R. Isaac said: He who partakes of a meal which does not bear any religious character will eventually be driven into exile, as it is said: "And eat the lambs out of the flock" etc., and as it is further said: "Therefore now shall they go captive" etc. (6.7).⁴

Each tribe had its own May-day. When a member of the tribe wished to celebrate his May-day, he would have his entire flock pass before him

* According to the Rabbinic interpretation seruhim is a derivation of sarah, to have an offensive odor.

1 Kiddushin, 71b. Cf. Shabbath, 62b; Num. R., 10; Ibid., 9.

2 Sifre, 136a.

3 Sifre, 135b.

4 Pesachim, 49a.

so that he could select the fattest one and slaughter it.¹

VI.5 That thrum on the psaltery, that devise for
themselves instruments of music, like David.

That thrum on the psaltery etc.⁷ Just as David sang hymns to God with
the aid of the psalteries, so they provided themselves with the psalteries
as they sang while partaking of wine, as it is said: "That drink wine in
bowls" (6.6).²

VI.6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves
with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved
for the hurt of Joseph.

That drink wine in bowls⁷ Targ. That drink wine in silver bowls.

See commentary on 3.15, p.89.

That drink wine in bowls⁷ 'And of the blood of the grape thou drankest
foaming wine' (Deut.32.14)--this refers to the days of the ten tribes, as
it is said: "That drink wine in bowls."³ It was nothing other than wine
that caused the ten tribes to go into captivity, as it is written: "That
drink wine in bowls." The same was true of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin,
as it is said, "But these also reel through wine, and stagger through strong
drink" (Isa.28.7).⁴ It is customary to drink wine in a bowl, as it is
said: "That drink wine in bowls."⁵ Wine was responsible for the destruc-
tion of Samaria and Jerusalem, as it is said, "That drink wine in bowls. . .
Therefore now shall they go captive" etc.⁶ According to Rab they partook

X

1 Num.R.,10. Cf. Tanhuma, Shemini,5; Lev.R.,5. 2 Num.R.,10; Cf.Lev.R.,5.

3 Sifre,135b.

4 Gen.R.,36. Cf.Tanh.,ed.Bub.,Noah,p.26a.

5 Num.R.,13.

6 Md. ha-Gadol,Gen.,176.

of hot drinks of wine and water that was kept in large bowls. R.Johanan said that they drank out of small cups.¹ R.Ami said: They used a cup with tubes from which several persons could drink simultaneously. R.Asi said: They threw their cups to one another in sport.² Other Rabbis said that they drank from cups which had saucers fastened to the bottom of them.** R.Abbuhu said in the name of R.Hanina: They got their wine from Pethugta*** because it made one lustful. Other Rabbis said in the name of R.Hanina that they got their wine from Pelugta.****¹

And anoint themselves with the chief ointments.7 R.Judah b. Ezekiel said: This is oil made of unripe olives which plucks the hair and smoothes the skin. R.Jannai said that it was virgin oil (i.e. oil that runs off without pressing), and after all this improvement "they are not grieved for the hurt of Joseph."¹ R.Judah said in the name of R.Samuel: This is foliatum (an ointment or oil prepared from leaves of spikenard).³

VI.7 Therefore now shall they go captive at the head
of them that go captive, and the revelry of them that
stretched themselves shall pass away.

And the revelry of them etc.7 Targ. And banquets and cushions will be removed from them.

1 Num.E., 10; Lev.E.5.

2 Shabbath, 62b.

*** A place in Galilee.

3 Shabbath, 62b.

* This is deduced from sarak, to throw.

** The saucers served to receive the drippings.

**** Near Tiberias.

Therefore now shall they go captive etc.⁷ From the comments given above we observe that the Rabbis enumerate several things which were responsible for the captivity of the ten tribes: (1) Their passion for wine¹; (2) adultery, the source of which evil was also wine²; (3) self-indulgence (eating and drinking and a sense of ease)³; (4) partaking of meals that are wholly secular in character.⁴

And the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away⁷ We already observed in the footnote on 6.4 that the Rabbis do not interpret sarah, stretched out but offensive odor. Thus they interpret this verse as follows: As soon as they will go into captivity the revelry of them who make their couches foul with semen will pass away.⁵

Mar Zutra said that it is from this verse that we deduce that a mourner occupies a seat at the head of the table. The deduction is made as follows: The word סר^d is made to read as though it were written שר (chief); Mirzah is broken up into two words: mar (bitter) and sah (distracted)*; seruhim is taken to refer to the comforters who are stretched out at the feet of the mourner. Thus the entire phrase is interpreted as follows: He who is suffering from the bitterness of soul and distraction (i.e. the mourner) becomes the chief over them who stretched themselves out ** before him (i.e. sits at the head of the table during the meal).⁶

1 Num.R.,10; Tanhuma, Shemini,5; Gen.R.,36; Lev.R.,5.

2 Num.R.,10; Shabbath,62b; Kiddushin,71b; Num.R.,9; Lev.R.,5.

3 Sifre,136a.

4 Pesachim,49a.

5 Num.R.,9.

* The principle of interpretation here employed is called Notrikon (breaking up a word into two or more).

** Note that Mar Zutra interprets seruhim, stretched out.

6 Kethubboth, 69b. Cf. Mo'ed Katan,28b.

VI.8 The Lord God hath sworn by Himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts: I abhor the pride of Jacob, and hate his palaces; and I will deliver up the city with all that is therein.

I abhor the pride of Jacob⁷ Targ. I shall make vile the temple, the dignity of Jacob.

The Lord God hath sworn by Himself⁷ If God who swore only once to Noah that he would never again bring a deluge upon the world, nevertheless fulfilled his promise, surely he will fulfill His promise to Zion (Israel) to whom He has sworn three times: once by Himself, once by the Sabbath, and once by the Torah. He swore by Himself, as it is said, "The Lord God hath sworn by Himself." He swore by the Sabbath, as it is said: "And on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested" (Exod.31.17).^{*} He swore by the Torah, as it is said, "The Lord hath sworn by His right hand" (Isa.62.8)-- this refers to the Torah, as it is said, "At his right hand was a fiery law unto them" (Deut.33.2).¹

VI.10 And when a man's uncle shall take him up, even he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is in the innermost parts of the house: 'Is there yet any with thee?' and he shall say: 'No'; then shall he say: 'Hold thy peace; for we must not make mention of the name of the Lord.'

* The beginning of the verse speaks of the Sabbath as an everlasting sign between God and Israel.

1 Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Noah.p.22a-b.

And when a man's uncle etc.⁷ Targ. And some one who is related to him will take his bones out of the fire, and shall say to him who is in the corner of the house: 'Is there anyone else with you here?' and he shall say: 'They have perished;' then shall he say: 'Hush, for when they were alive they did not pray in the name of the Lord.'

And he shall say: 'No!⁷ "Is his mercy clean gone (a-fes) forever?" (Ps. 77.9). R. Reuben said: A-fes is a Greek word, as it is said: "And he shall say: 'No' (a-fes).¹

Hold thy peace etc.⁷ "A time to keep silence" (Eccles.3.7). If we praise the name of God at a time when we are in a low estate, the nations of the world silence us and say to us: "Hold thy peace; for we must not make mention of the name of the Lord."²

Hold thy peace etc.⁷ During the famine the prophet Elijah met a man who was swollen from hunger and embracing his idol. "What family are you from?" Elijah asked. He told him. "How many were you?" "Three thousand." "How many of you are left?" "I am the only one." "Are you willing to recite one verse and live?" "Yes." "Then say: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut.6.4), and you will live." The man shouted at him and said: "'Hold thy peace; for we must not make mention of the name of the Lord;' father has not taught me thus."³

VI.11 For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and the great house shall be smitten into splinters, and the little house into chips.

1 Lament.R.1.

2 Md. Temura, 23, Beth ha-Midrash, I, p.112-113.

* I.e. to believe in the God of Israel.

3 Sifra, 112a.

And the great house etc.₇ Targ. And he shall smite the large kingdom a mighty stroke and the small kingdom a weak stroke.

And the great house shall be smitten into splinters etc.₇ When the destruction is brought about by making breaches, there remain ruins; when it is done by chopping, however, no ruins remain. The two means of demolition are not alike.¹

YI.12 Do horses run upon the rock? Doth one plow there with oxen? That ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.

That ye have turned justice into gall etc.₇ "That the Lord thy God shall keep with thee the covenant and the mercy' (Deut.7.12). R.Simeon b.Halafta said: This may be compared to a king who married a matron who brought into his house two emblems (of faith); the king, too, had two corresponding emblems set for her. When the matron lost her emblems, the king also took his away. When some time later she retrieved herself and recovered the emblems the king also brought his emblems back and said: "I shall have a crown made of the four emblems and place it upon the head of the matron."^N Similarly we find that Abraham presented his children with two emblems: righteousness and justice (Gen.18.19), and God had two corresponding emblems set for Israel: lovingkindness and mercy (Deut.7.12; 13.18). When the Israelites lost theirs, as it is said: "Ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood", God also took his away, as it is said: "For I have taken away My peace. . . . even mercy and compassion"

1 Lev.R.,19. Cf. Cant.R.,4; Eccles.R.,10.

(Jer.16.5). When later the Israelites vindicated themselves in the eyes of God and recovered the two emblems, as it is written: "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness" (Isa.1.27), God also brought His emblems back, for thus it is written, "For the mountains may depart. . . .but My kindness shall not depart from thee" etc. (Isa.54.10). God then said: A crown shall be made of these four emblems, and placed upon the head of Israel, as it is said: "Yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in compassion. And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord" (Hos.2.21-22).¹

VI.13 Ye that rejoice in a thing of nought, that say:

'Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?'

That say etc.] Targ. That say: 'Was it not with our own strength that we acquired wealth?'

Have we not taken to us horns etc.] See commentary on 1.3, pp.54-55.

VII.1-6 Thus the Lord God showed me; and, behold he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. (2) And if it had come to pass that when they made an end of eating the grass of the land--so I said: O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee; how shall Jacob stand? for he is small. (3) The

1 Deut. R.3.

Lord repented concerning this; 'It shall not be',
 saith the Lord. (4) Thus the Lord God showed me; and,
 behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire; and
 it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up
 the land. (5) Then said I: O Lord God, cease, I be-
 seech Thee; How shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
 (6) The Lord repented concerning this; 'This also
 shall not be', saith the Lord God.

So I said: O Lord God, forgive etc.⁷ Targ. So I said: Hear my prayer, O
 Lord God, forgive now the sins of the remainder of the house of Jacob;
 who will rise and pray for their sins, seeing that they are homeless?
 Then said I: O Lord God etc.⁷ Targ. Same as in 7.2.

See commentary on 3.7, pp. 78-79.

And, behold, He formed locusts etc.⁷ The Midrash interprets these words
 allegorically. The locusts represent Israel's enemies.¹

The prophet Elijah said: God frequently bemoans the fact that the
 world is not filled with such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and
 David. When the Israelites were sinful during their sojourn in the wilder-
 ness, God said: "Consider how many miracles and mighty deeds I performed
 in their behalf and still they have no faith in Me. For Jacob, on the
 other hand, I never performed any miracles and yet he was righteous before
 Me all the days of his life". . . . Furthermore, when the prophet Amos
 arose to plead before God for mercy on behalf of Israel, he said: "O Master

1 Md. Zuta, Cant., 1.

of the universe! Shall the whole world be destroyed because it does not have anyone like Jacob?" Our Father in heaven! May your great name be blessed forever and ever! You will yet have satisfaction from Israel, your servants, wherever they may dwell, for you did not allow your servant, Amos, the prophet, to depart without answering him at once, as it is said: "Thus the Lord God showed me; and, behold, He formed locusts. . . .The Lord repented concerning this; 'It shall not be', saith the Lord" (7.1-3). This is the first section; what do we find in the second section: "Thus the Lord God showed me; and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire. . . .The Lord repented concerning this; 'This also shall not be', saith the Lord God" (7.4-6). Thus we see that twice God revealed through Amos that He showed compassion to Israel. God said to Amos: "Have I not written in my Law through your teacher Moses, 'Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee? A people saved by the Lord' (Deut.33.29). This obtains whether they are wicked or righteous.

Though the Torah comes from God it is, nevertheless, ascribed to Moses, as it is said: "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant" etc. (Mal.3.22). This is because on four or five occasions Moses prayed to God on behalf of Israel and thereby saved Israel from death; In the days of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah and the rest of the prophets, on the other hand, they did not know how to pour forth their hearts and plead for mercy on behalf of Israel.¹

How shall Jacob stand? for he is small¹⁷ A certain king had a field which all of his sons desired. The king, however, loved his youngest son

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 6.

most and therefore gave the field to him. Similarly, it is said of Israel: "How shall Jacob stand? for he is small", and it is also said: "Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut.32.9).¹

R. Jose b. Hanina said: Our teacher Moses pronounced four hardships over Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them. Moses said, "And Israel dwelleth in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone" (Deut.33.23).^{*} Amos came and revoked it, as it is said, "Cease, I beseech Thee; how shall Jacob stand" etc., and it continues, "The Lord repented concerning this" etc.²

VII.7 Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.

The Lord stood etc.] Targ. The Lord stood upon the wall of judgment and before him was judgment.

And behold, the Lord stood beside a wall etc.] R. Judah b. Idi said in the name of R. Johanan: We learn from Scripture that the Divine Presence travelled ten journeys.** They were: From the arkcover to the cherub, from one cherub to the other, from the cherub to the threshold, from the threshold to the courtyard, from the courtyard to the altar, from the altar to the roof, from the roof to the wall, from the wall to the city, from the city to the mountain, from the mountain to the wilderness, and from the wilderness in the Divine presence returned to its original place, as it is said, "I

1 Md. Tehillim, Ps.5.

* Israel will dwell safely only when she is as righteous as Jacob--Rashi.

2 Makkoth, 24a. ** To get away from Israel when she sinned.

and the narrative gave the field to the. Similarly, it is said of James:
"The small Jacob stood for he is small", and it is also said: "Jacob is
the lot of his inheritance" (Gen. 28:13).

James 2:14-16 says: Our brother James presented four parables
very formal, but four parables were not revealed from. These were, "and
James 2:14-16 is a parable, the foundation of Jacob's name" (Gen. 28:13).
These came and revealed it, as it is said, "James, I knowed them; howbeit
James stood, etc., and is continued, "The Lord revealed concerning these
etc."

VII.7. Then he showed me, and behind, the Lord stood
beside a wall made by a foundation, with a foundation
in his hand.

The Lord stood etc. V.7. Then the Lord stood upon the wall of judgment and
before him was judgment.
and behind, the Lord stood beside the wall etc. V.7. Then the Lord stood
upon of judgment: to judge from the right that the living through James
had his journey. "They were: from his answer to the church, from the
church to the altar, from the altar to the threshold, from the threshold
to the courtyard, from the courtyard to the altar, from the altar to the
wall, from the wall to the city, from the city
to the threshold, from the threshold to the wilderness, and from the wilderness
in the living presence returned to its original place, as it is said, V.

1. The foundation, etc.
2. James will surely say when he is as righteous as Jacob--James.
3. James, etc. "Is not every man James' friend?"

will go and return to My place" (Hosea 5.15). . . . From the courtyard to the altar, as it is said, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar" (Amos 9.1). . . . From the roof to the wall, as it is said, "And behold the Lord stood beside a wall" etc.¹

R. Eleazar said: Since the destruction of the Temple the gates of prayer are locked. R. Hilda said: All gates are locked excepting those through which pass the cries of wrong (ona'ah), for it is said, "Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall of wrongs, and in His hand were the wrongs" (Amos 7.7)." R. Eleazar said: All sins are punished through an agent, excepting wrong, for it is said, "And in His hand were the wrongs!" R. Abbahu said: There are three sins before which the Curtain*** is not closed: 1 wrong (over-reaching), 2 robbery, and 3 idolatry. Wrong, for it is written, 'And in His hand was the wrong' etc. etc.²

"And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbor" etc. (Lev. 25.14). This is as it is said: "And behold, the Lord stood beside a wall" etc., upon the wall of (i.e. watching over) the wrong (in sale and purchase), "And in His hand are the wrongs," as the creditor who stands before his debtor, holding the note of indebtedness in his hand.³

In this world the prophets alone have been able to see the glory of God. One of them said that he saw God at the altar, as it is said, "I

1 Rosh Hashanah, 31a; Cf. Aboth de R. Nathan, 34, 6; Intro. to Lament. R., 25; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, 115; Md. Zuta, Cant., 5.

* Annā is used here as though it were a derivation of ona'ah (wronging); i.e. God is always ready to listen to the cry of one who has been wronged.

** God Himself punishes for wrongs.

*** The Curtain of Heaven, hiding, as it were, man's sins from God's view.

2 Baba Mezi'a, 59a; Cf. Tanh., Noah, 4.

3 Lev. R., 33.

saw the Lord standing beside the altar" (Amos 9.1); Ezekiel said: "The word of the Lord came. . . .by the river Chebar" (1.3); Amos said he saw God near the wall, as it is said, "Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline". . . .But in the future life everybody will see Him, as it is said, "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40.5).¹

VII.8 And the Lord said unto me: 'Amos, what seest thou?' And I said: 'A plumbline.' Then said the Lord: Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel; I will not again pardon them any more.

And I said: 'A plumbline' (anak)⁷ Anak refers to the Great Sanhedrin* for it has a numerical value of seventy-one.**2

Behold I will set a plumbline⁷ R. Judah ben R. Simon said: Nothing makes the kettle durable but (anakah)*** its glaze lining; so says the Lord (ana'kekem) I am your lining (stay) during trials in this world but in the Messianic future "I will not again pardon them any more."****

1 Aggadath Bereshith, 68.

* The supreme council of the Jews, consisting of seventy-one members.

** The principle of interpretation employed here is called Gematria (Computation of the numeric value of letters). The Midrash, presumably, wishes to convey the thought that Israel will be judged by the supreme council.

2 Lev. R. 33. Cf. Intro. to Lament. R., 25.

*** R. Judah takes anak to mean a glaze.

**** The above interpretation is suggested by Jastrow in his Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli etc., (See anak). It is possible that the Midrash should be interpreted as follows: Just as the contents of a kettle steadily diminishes while it is on the fire, so God said he would cause Israel to decrease in numbers in this world through suffering, but in the Messianic future "I will not again be wroth with them." This is interpreting al'tor in the sense of wrath, as the Midrash does in 5.17 (see above, p. 121)

R. Isaac and R. Tibyomi said: Concerning all sins it is written: "Forgiving iniquity" (Ex. 34.7), but here (concerning wronging) it is written: "I will not again pardon them anymore."¹

VII.10-11 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying: 'Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.' For thus Amos saith: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.'

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent etc.⁷ R. Johanan said: Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel was considered worthy to be reckoned with the kings of Judah (Hos. 1.1) because he did not listen to the slander that was spoken against Amos. Whence do we derive that he did not listen to slander? For it is written: "Then Amaziah the priest" etc. Jeroboam said, "God forbid that this righteous man should have spoken thus, and if he has, what can I do to him? It was God who told it to him."²

"For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter. . . .neither was there any helper for Israel. . . .But He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash" (2K. 14.26-27). In what way did Jeroboam differ from all the kings of Israel who preceded him? Did not Jeroboam worship heathen deities? It is because he paid no attention to the slander

1 Lev. R. ibid.

2 Pesahim, 87b.

that was spoken against Amos, as it is said, "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el" etc. Jeroboam angrily rebuked Amaziah and said to him, "God forbid that he should have uttered such a prophecy, and if he has, it came from heaven." Just then God said: Though this is a generation that worships idols and the leader of the generation (Jeroboam) worships idols, yet give the land, concerning which I said to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 'I will give it unto thy seed' (Deut.34.4), to him who would not listen to slander. It was said, the land that God did not give to Israel through the hand of Joshua or David, king of Israel, he gave through the hand of Jeroboam, as it is said, "He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah" etc. (2K.14.25).¹

For thus Amos saith: Jeroboam shall die by the sword etc.⁷ In the days of Amos, two years before the earthquake, it was already decreed that Israel would cease to be a people, as it is said, "For thus Amos saith: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land'".²

"Children in whom is no faithfulness" (Deut.32.20). You are children in whom there is no faithfulness. When you stood before Mount Sinai and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey" (Ex.24.7), I also said to you, "Ye are godlike beings" (Ps.82.6). But when you said to the calf, "This is thy god, O Israel" (Ex.32.4), I also said to you, "Nevertheless ye shall die like men" (Ps.82.7). When I brought you into the land of your forefathers and gave you the Temple, I told you that you

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 17. Cf. Seder Eliyyahu Zuta, 7.

2 Seder Olam Rabba, 28.

would never be exiled from there. But when you said, "We have no portion in David" (2Sam.20.1), I also said to you, "And Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land."¹

VII.14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah:

'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son;

but I was a herdman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees.

But I was a herdman etc.] Targ. For I am the owner of flocks and I possess sycomore-trees in the lowland; I afflict my soul because of the sins of the people of Israel.

I was no prophet etc.] R. Johanan said: All the prophets were wealthy.

We derive this from Moses, Samuel, Amos and Jonah. . . . Amos, because it is written, "Then answered Amos. . . ."but I was a herdman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees," which R. Joseph translated: Behold, I am the owner of flocks, and possess sycomore trees in the lowland.*²

When Scripture mentions the name of the prophet's father, then we know that the father was also a prophet. But when the father's name is omitted, then we know that the father was not a prophet. The only exception to that is Amos whose father was also a prophet though his name is not mentioned, as it is said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son." Just as Amos was a prophet even though he said that he was not, so his father was a prophet, even though he said that his father was not a prophet.³

1 Sifre, 137a.

2 Nedarim, 38a.

* This is the rendering of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

3 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 6. Cf. Lev. R., 6.

When R. Eliezer heard that a disciple had rendered a legal decision in the presence of his teacher, he said he was convinced that the disciple would die within the week. When it happened that he died within the specified time, the disciples asked R. Eliezer whether he was a prophet. R. Eliezer replied, "I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but so the tradition has been handed down to me, that whoever renders a legal decision in the presence of his teacher forfeits his life."¹

But I was a herdman etc.⁷ Work is greatly to be esteemed for all the prophets have engaged in it. Of Jacob it is said, "I will again feed thy flock and keep it" (Gen.30.31); of Moses it is said, "Now Moses was keeping the flock" (Ex.3.1); of David it is said, "And took him from the sheepfolds" (Ps.78.70); of Amos it is said, "But I was a herdman. . . . and the Lord took me from following the flock."²

VII.15 And the Lord took me from following the flock,
and the Lord said unto me: Go, prophesy unto My people
Israel.

And the Lord took me etc.⁷ Targ. And the Lord has taken me from the shed,
from following the flock etc.

And the Lord took me etc.⁷ "The Lord trieth the righteous" (Ps.11.5).

R. Isaac said: By what means does God try the righteous? By means of the pasture. David was tried by means of the pasture (Ps.78.71); Amos was

1 Levit. R., 20. Cf. Md. ha-Gadol, Levit., p.188.

2 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 20. Cf. Md. Gadol u-Gedolah, Beth ha-Midrash, III, pp.125-126.

tried by means of the pasture, as it is said, "And the Lord took me from following the flock"; even Moses was tried by means of the pasture, as it is said, "Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro" (Exod.3.1).¹

VII.16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord:

Thou sayest: Prophecy not against Israel, and preach not against the house of Isaac.

And preach not etc.] Prophecy is called by ten different names. One of these is batafah (preaching), as it is said, "And preach not against the house of Isaac."²

VII.17 Therefore thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

And thy land shall be divided by line] Targ. And thy land shall be divided by lot.

And thou thyself shalt die etc.] R. Anan said: Whoever is buried in the land of Israel, it is as though he were buried under the altar. . . . Ulla frequently made visits to the land of Israel but died outside the Land. When this news reached R. Eleazar he exclaimed, "Thou Ulla, 'shouldst die in an unclean land!' When he was later informed that his coffin had arrived,"

1 Tanh., ed. Bub., Exod., 3b.

2 Mishnat R. Eliezer, 6.

* In the land of Israel for burial.

he said, "Receiving a man in his lifetime is not the same as receiving him after his death."¹

According to the Midrash the reference is to the prophet Ezekiel who was not buried in the land of Israel because he expressed doubt as to whether God was able to revive the dry bones of the valley (Ezek.37.3).² And Israel shall surely be led away captive etc.⁷ "And the anger of the Lord be kindled against you" (Deut.11.17). Following all the punishment that I shall inflict upon you, I shall cause you to go into captivity. Captivity is the most severe of all punishments, as it is said, "And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger and in wrath (Deut.29.27), and as it is also said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord. . . and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land."³

VIII.2 And He said: 'Amos, what seest thou?' And I said: 'A basket of summer fruit.' Then said the Lord unto me: The end is come upon My people Israel; I will not again pardon them any more.

The end is come etc.⁷ Targ. The retribution of the end (i.e. the final retribution) has arrived in order to come upon my people Israel.

VIII.3 And the songs of the palace shall be wailings in that day, saith the Lord God; the dead bodies shall be many; in every place silence shall be cast.

1 Kethubboth, 111a.

* A commentator on the Midrash observes that Amos is here addressing himself to Amaziah and wonders what connection it has with Ezekiel.

2 Pirke R. Eliezer, 33.

3 Sifre, 82a.

And the songs of the palace etc.⁷ Targ. Instead of song there shall then be wailing in their homes.

And the songs (shiroth) of the palace etc.⁷ By shiroth (songs) is not meant the profane songs that were sung in the palace but the religious songs and hymns of praise that were chanted in the Temple.¹

VIII.4 Hear this, O ye that would swallow the needy, and destroy the poor of the land.

O ye that would swallow etc.⁷ Targ. O ye that despise the head of the poor as the dust of the earth.

O ye that would swallow (ha-cho'afim) the needy⁷ "Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters (velo-ashafim)" (Ban.2.2). The ashafim are those who press upon the planetary constellation, for the root ashaf means to press, as it is said, "Hear this, O ye that would press (ha-cho'afim) the needy."²

VIII.5 Saying: 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth corn?' Making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances of deceit.

Saying: 'When will the new moon' etc.⁷ Targ. When will the leap-year month arrive, that we may sell grain?* And the year of release, that we

1 Cant.R.,1. 2 Tanh, Mi'kez,2; Cf. Tanh.ed.Bub.,Mi'kez,p.95;Md.ha-ḡadol, Gen.,330. * The additional month during leap-year will cause a postponement of the wave-offering without which the grain of the new crop may not be eaten, thus placing the grain of the old crop at a premium--Rashi.

may open our store-houses etc.*

Saying: 'When will the new moon' etc.] The Rabbis taught: Concerning those who store up fruit,** lend money on usury, make the ephah small, and raise prices, Scripture says, saying: "When will the new moon be gone" etc, and it is also said concerning them, "The Lord hath sworn by the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget any of their works" (Am. 8.7).¹

VIII.6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the corn.'

And the needy for a pair of shoes] Targ. Same as in 2.6.

VIII.7 The Lord hath sworn by the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget any of their works.

See commentary on 8.5. ~~xliv~~

VIII.8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? Yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt.

* The year of release will cause the price of grain to rise.

** To sell it later when prices have risen.

1 Baba Bathra, 90b. Cf. Dereh Eretz Rabba, 2; Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 15.

Shall not the land tremble etc.⁷ Targ. Shall not the land be destroyed for this and every one who dwells therein be confounded, and a king will come upon it with his army which is as numerous as the waters of the river and will overrun it completely and drive out its inhabitants, and it shall sink like the river of Egypt.

VIII.9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.

And it shall come to pass in that day etc.⁷ R.Johanan said: This refers to the day on which Josiah, king of Judah, was killed in battle.

When R.Johanan died, R.Isaac b.Eleazar began his eulogy over him as follows: This day is as difficult for Israel as the day in which the sun will set at noon, for it is written, "And it shall come to pass in that day" etc.¹

According to legend a certain freakish individual, by the name of Armilus, professing to be god, asked Nehemiah and the rest of the Israelites to accept him as their deity. When they declined to do so he assembled a vast army and waged war against them. Many thousands of Israelites were killed including Nehemiah who was slain at noon. It was to this episode that the prophet referred when he said, "It shall come to pass. . . .that I will cause the sun to go down at noon" etc.²

1 Mo'ed Katan, 25b.

* Not the Nehemiah of the Bible.

2 R.Simeon b.Yohai, Beth ha-Midrash, IV, pp.124-125 Tefilat.

VIII.10 And I will turn your feast into mourning,
and all your songs into lamentation; and I will
bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness
upon every head; and I will make it as the mourn-
ing for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter
day.

And I will turn your feast into mourning⁷ One who is in mourning must
not engage in any work, for it is written, "And I will turn your feast
into mourning."--just as it is forbidden to do any work on the festival,
so it is forbidden to do work when one is in mourning.*¹

Whence do we derive that the period of mourning lasts seven days?
For it is written, "And I will turn your feasts into mourning"--just as
the festival lasts seven days, so the period of mourning lasts seven days.*
But, the question was raised, is not the Feast of Weeks observed for only
one day? Why, then, should not the period of mourning be limited to one
day? The answer is that a one day period of mourning applies only in such
cases in which the mourner did not learn of the death until thirty days
later.²

And the end thereof as a bitter day⁷ As the day in which a death has oc-
curred in one's immediate family.³ According to R. Sheshes the reference is
to the day of burial.⁴

* The principle of interpretation here employed is called Heckesh, a comparison,
or analogy, based on the close connection of two subjects in one and the
same passage of the Law. 1 Mo'ed Katan, 15b.

2 Mo'ed Katan, 20a. Cf. Jer. Mo'ed Katan, 82c; Gen. R., 100; Deut. R., 89.

3 Berakoth, 16b. Cf. Mo'ed Katan, 21a; Sukkah, 25b. 4 Zebahim, 100b.

VIII.11-12 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.¹² And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

Behold, the days come etc.⁷ The Rabbis taught in Jamnia that at some time in the future the knowledge of the Torah is going to be forgotten in Israel, as it is said, "Behold, the days come" etc.

To seek the word of the Lord⁷ There are three opinions as to what is meant by the word of the Lord: (1) The law; there will be no learned men to render legal judgments. (2) The days of the Messiah; they will seek to find out when they are going to be redeemed but to no avail. (3) Prophecy; they will seek comfort through prophecy but will not find it. They shall run to and fro etc.⁷ Women will wander through synagogues and houses of study in order to obtain legal judgments but no one will be found who will be capable of rendering such judgments to them.

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: God forbid that the Torah should ever be wholly forgotten in Israel, as it is said, "For it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" (Deut. 31.21). What the prophet meant when he said: "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord" etc., was that the law will not be clear to them and differences of opinion will arise.¹

¹ Shabbath, 138b. Cf. Tosefta, 'Eduyyoth I, 1; Sifre, 84b; Md. ha-Gadol, Lev., p. 235.

"And there was a famine in the land" (Ruth 1.1). There have been ten famines in the world, one in the days of Adam, one in the days of Lamech. . . .and one that is yet to come, as it is written, "And I will send a famine in the land" etc.¹

"The rebellious dwell but in a parched land" (Ps. 68.7). They will be parched for lack of Torah, as it is said, "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."²

"That faint for hunger at the head of every street" (Lament. 2.19). It is for the words of the Torah that they hungered, as it is said, "Behold, the days come. . . .not a famine of bread. . . .but of hearing the words of the Lord."³

"Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob" (Jer. 2.4). Hear ye the word of the Lord before you find yourselves wandering about, seeking it, and not being able to find it, as it is said, "And they shall wander from sea to sea" etc.⁴

VIII.13 In that day shall the fair virgins and
the young men faint for thirst.

In that day etc.,⁷ Targ. In that day the congregation of Israel, which may be compared to beautiful virgins who because of their beauty go astray with sinful young men, will grow faint and be tossed about and cast away in thirst.

1 Gen. R., 25. Cf. Gen. R., 40; 64; Ruth R., 1; Md. Shemuel, 28.

2 Num. R., 3. 3 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 21. Cf. ibid. 27; Md. Hagadol, Gen., col. 466; Md. Mishle, 29a.

4 Aggadath Bereshith, 74.

VIII.14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say:

'As thy God, O Dan, liveth'; and: 'As the way of Beer-sheba liveth'; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

They that swear by the sin of Samaria etc.] Whoever worships heathen deities, whether it be during his early years or latter years, and dies without having done penance, has no share in the world to come, even if he were fit to be a high priest, as it is said, "They that swear by the sin of Samaria! . . . even they shall fall, and never rise up again."¹

"But Zion said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me" (Isa.40.14). I have overlooked all your sins but you have forsaken

Me, as it is said, "Thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by no-gods" (Jer.5.7). I adjured you by Sinai, but you "swear by the sin of Samaria."²

'As thy God, O Dan, liveth'] R. Judah said: Dan is the name of a heathen deity, as it is said, "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say:

'As thy God, O Dan, liveth!'"³

And: 'As the way (derek) of Beer-sheba liveth'] "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way (derek) that I go" (Gen.28.20) from heathen deities, adultery, murder and calumny. Derek refers to the worship of heathen deities, as it is said, "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say: 'As thy God, O Dan, liveth'; and: 'As the way (derek) of Beer-sheba liveth.' Derek refers to adultery, as it is said, "So is the way

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 3.

2 Aggadath Bereshith, 71.

3 Shabbath, 67a. Cf. Jer. Shabbath, 8c; Tosefta, Shabbath, VIII, 1.

(derej) of an adulterous woman" (Prov.30.30) etc.¹

IX.1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar; and He said: Smite the capitals, that the posts may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the residue of them with the sword; there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape.

I saw the Lord etc.] Targ. The prophet Amos said: I have seen the glory of the Lord rise from the Cherub and rest upon the altar and say: 'If the people of the house of Israel do not go back to the Law, the lamp will be extinguished, king Josiah will be killed, the house will be laid waste, the courts will be destroyed, the vessels of the Temple will go into captivity, and the remainder of them I will kill with the sword' etc.

See Amos 3.7, p.76. (footnote)

See Amos 3.7, pp.139-140.

See Amos 7.7, pp.140-141.

I saw the Lord standing (ni'gab) beside the altar] The word "Yezibah" (standing) everywhere suggests the presence of the Holy Spirit, as it is said, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar," and as it is also said, "And the Lord came, and stood" etc. (1Sam.3.10).²

1 Gen.R.70.

2 Mekilta, 28b; Cf.Md.Mishle, 38a.

"And he (Jacob) dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood beside him" etc. (Gen.28.12-13). Every dream has its interpretation. From the above verse we derive that God had given Jacob an opportunity to behold the temple completely built, to witness the offering of sacrifices, to see the priests during their ministrations at the temple, and finally to behold God Himself as he makes His appearance at the temple. "And behold a ladder"--the ladder represents the holy temple; "and the top of it reached to heaven"--this refers to the sacrifices that are offered and whose fragrance rises heavenward; "and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it"--the reference here is to the priests who are constantly ascending and descending the inclined plane leading to the altar (We find in Malachi 2.7 that the priest is spoken of as "the messenger (or angel) of the Lord of hosts"); "and behold, the Lord stood beside him"--this refers to God's presence in the temple while the sacrifices are being offered, as it is said, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar."¹

"I have also spoken unto the prophets, and I have multiplied visions" (Hos.1.21). God has revealed Himself to the prophets in various forms. Amos has seen God in a standing position, as it is said, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar;" Isaiah has seen Him in a sitting position, as it is said, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne" (6.1); Moses has seen

¹ Md. Tehillim, Ps.78; Cf. Gen.R.,68. Note. In Gen. R. the "ladder" represents the footstool and "set up on the earth" refers to the altar.

Him as a mighty man, as it is said, "The Lord is a man of war" (Exod. 15.3); Daniel has seen Him as an old man, as it is said, "And the hair of his head like pure wool" (7.9).¹

"I saw the Lord standing beside the altar"--standing ready to slay the generation; "and he said: Smite the capitals"--this refers to King Josiah; "that the posts may shake" refers to his counselors; "and break them in pieces on the head of all of them"--the reference here is to robbery which the people had committed and which the prophet considered as the most serious of all their crimes.²

A king once made a feast but he did not specify to his guests any hour when they were to leave. The wise ones among them left in mid-afternoon and were able to reach their homes and retire while it was still light. Others left when the sun was already setting. When they reached their homes they found that they were open and that the lights were burning. They entered their homes and retired with the aid of the lights. A third group left the feast after it had already been dark for two or three hours. When they reached home they found that some of their homes were open and others were locked, in some of them the lights were still burning while in others they were already extinguished. These were obliged to enter their homes and retire in complete darkness. Those who tarried at the feast still longer became intoxicated with wine, began to beat one another and kill each other. They finally left in darkness and found their homes locked,

1 Aggadath Berishith, 14. * According to the Rabbinic interpretation bega'am is a derivation of bega, unjust gain; "on the head of all of them" means more than all the other crimes.

2 Lev.R., 33; Cf. Eccles.R., 3.

as it is said, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar. . . .and I will slay the residue of them with the sword."¹

IX.3-4 Though they dig into the netherworld, thence shall My hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; and I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

Though they dig into etc.,⁷ Targ. If they imagine they will be able to hide as in the netherworld, their enemy will seize them from there at my command, and if they will go up upon the mountains that are nearly as high as heaven, from there they will bring them down at my command.

And though they hide themselves etc.,⁷ Targ. And if they intend to hide themselves upon the tops of the towers of the cities, thence will I command the constables to search for them; and if they shall hide from before

* The longer they will remain in exile the more they will suffer.

1. Sennahoth, 8.

my Word in the islands of the sea, thence will I command the nations that are as mighty as the serpent that they shall slay them.

Thence will I command the sword etc.⁷ Targ. Thence will I command those who slay with the sword that they shall slay them; and I will set Myself upon them etc.

Though they dig into the netherworld⁷ On the day of judgment the nations will bring their heathen deities along with them that they may save them but God will cause them to melt and they will be abashed and will cast them away and will then seek to hide themselves in caves and in rocks. But God will say to them, "Are you seeking to flee? See what I have written: 'And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight' etc. and it is also, said, 'though they dig into the netherworld' etc." But concerning Israel it is said, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Prov.18.10).¹

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1.3). Is it possible that Jonah intended to flee from God? Has it not been said long ago, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?" etc. (Ps.139.7-10). . . .and it has also been said, "Though they dig into the netherworld. . . .and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmeland though they go into captivity" etc. But Jonah mused: I will go outside of the land, where the Divine Presence does not reveal itself. For since the Gentiles are more inclined to repent, I may be causing Israel to be condemned.²

1 Exod. R.,15.

2 Mekilta, 1b.

IX.5 For the Lord, the God of hosts, is He that toucheth the land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein mourn; and it riseth up wholly like the River, and sinketh again, like the River of Egypt.

And all that dwell therein mourn etc.⁷ Targ. Same as in 8.8.

IX.6 It is He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven, and hath founded His vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; the Lord is His name.

It is He that buildeth etc.⁷ Targ. Who causes His glory to dwell in the great heights and established his congregation upon the earth, who commanded to collect armies that were as numerous as the waters of the river and scattered them upon the face of the earth etc.

It is He that buildeth His upper chambers etc.⁷ Beth Shammai says that the heaven was created first and the earth later, as it is said, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Gen.1.1); Beth Hillel says, on the other hand, that first the earth was created and the heaven was created later, as it is said, "In the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven" (Gen.2.4). Beth Hillel said to Beth Shammai: "According to

* Heaven is mentioned first.

your words, one builds the upper story first and ^{the} rest of the house later, as it is said, 'It is He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven'" etc. Beth Shammai replied: "According to your words one first makes the footstool and then the chair (or throne), as it is said, 'Thus saith the Lord: The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool'" (Isa.66.1).¹

Two ships were tied together and over them was constructed a residence. Only so long as the two ships remain attached to each other will the construction that has been built over them subsist. In like manner "He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven"--only so long as Israel is united into one "agudah" (brotherhood) on earth, is the throne of God firmly established in heaven. Similarly is it said, "And there was a king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the ^{people} were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together" (Deut.33.5). Only when the tribes of Israel are united is God king in Jeshurun.²

"The fruit of goodly trees" (Lev.23.40)--this refers to Israel. Just as the citron* has both taste and fragrance, so in Israel there are men who possess both learning and good deeds. "Branches of palm-trees" (Ibid)--this refers to Israel. Just as the palm branch has taste but no fragrance, so in Israel there are men who possess learning but not good deeds. "And boughs of thick trees" (Ibid)--this refers to Israel. Just as the myrtle branch has fragrance but no taste, so in Israel there are men who possess

1 Hagigah, 12a.
 * According to Rabbinic interpretation "the fruit of goodly trees" refers to the citron.
 2 Num.R., 15; Cf. Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Beha-aloth-Mo, 28b; Sifre, 144a, Md. Shemuel, 5.

good deeds but no learning. "And willows of the brook" (ibid)--this refers to Israel. Just as the willow has neither taste nor fragrance, so in Israel there are men who possess neither learning nor good deeds. What shall God do with them? To destroy them is impossible. Therefore said God: Let them all be united into one "agudah" (brotherhood) and make atonement for one another. As soon as you will do that I shall become exalted. It is in connection with this that it is said, "He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven." When is He exalted? When they form into one "agudah," as it is said, "And hath founded His "agudah" upon the earth."¹

When ten men sit together and are engaged in the study of the Torah, the Divine Presence abides among them, as it is said, "God standeth in the congregation of God" (Ps.82.1).^{*} And whence can it be shown that the same is true of five? For it is said, "He hath founded his "agudah" upon the earth."^{**2}

When three men sit together and are engaged in the study of the Torah, God considers it unto them as though they had formed into one "agudah" before Him, as it is said, "He that buildeth His upper chambers in the heaven, and hath founded his "agudah"^{***} upon the earth."³

When one takes a bundle of reeds in his hands he is not able to break them all together. When taken individually, however, even a child can break them. Similarly, Israel will not be redeemed until they form into

1 Lev.R.,30; Cf.Mishnat R.Elizer, 5; Tanh. Emor,17; Tanh. ed. Bub., Emor, 49b; Menahoth,27a; Kerithoth,6b.

* Ten are the minimum to form a congregation.

** The minimum to constitute an "agudah" is five.

2 Aboth 3,6; *** According to this reading three constitute an "agudah."

3 Aboth de R.Nathan,8,4.

one "agudah."¹

God called Israel by seventy names. One of these is "agudah," as it is said, "And hath founded his "agudah" upon the earth."²

"Lo tith-go-de-du" (Deut.14.1)--you shall not form into separate "agudoth," but you shall all be united in one "agudah," and thus it is said, "And hath founded his "agudah" upon the earth."³

He that calleth for the waters of the sea etc.⁷ "But the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord is His name" (Hos.12.6). He is the Lord, the God of hosts for He performs His will with the aid of both the hosts from above and the hosts from below. When He desires He executes His will with the aid of the hosts from below, as it is said, "He that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." When He desires He executes His will with the aid of the hosts from above, as it is said, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Jud.5.20).⁴

"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever. . . .and God hath so made it, that men should fear before Him" (Eccles.3.14). R. Judah b.R.Simon said: Adam was worthy enough to live for ever. The reason he was committed to die was so "that men should fear before Him" (Ibid). R.Eleazar said: Since the creation of the world it has been said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place" (Gen.1.9), and the purpose of that was in order to "let the dry land appear" (Ibid).

1 Sifre,144a.

2 Md.Zuta,Cant.,1.

3 Sifre,94a.

4 Aggadath Bereshith,53.

Why then has it twice been written, "He that calleth for the waters of the sea" etc. (Amos 9.6; 5.8), once during the days of the flood and once during the days of the tower of Babel? But "God hath so made it, that men should fear before Him."¹

IX.7 Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?

Are ye not as the children etc. ⁷ Targ. Are you not considered unto Me as beloved children etc.

Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me ⁷ "Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning Cush a Benjamite" (Ps.7.1). Was his name Cush? Was not his name Saul? It is to teach us that just as the skin of an Ethiopian (Cushi) is distinctive, so Saul's deeds were distinctive*. . . . Similarly, it is said, "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" Is their name Cushiyim (Ethiopians)? Is not their name Israel? It is to teach us that just as the skin of an Ethiopian is distinctive, so the deeds of Israel are distinctive.²

"Concerning Cush" (Ps.7.1)--this refers to the household of Israel. When Israel sins to God He calls them Ethiopians, as it is said, "Are ye

1 Koheleth R., 3. * He was very righteous--Rashi.

2 Mo'ed Katan, 16b; Cf. Sifre, 27a; Pirke R. Eliezer, 53.

not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?"¹

"I am black, but comely" (Cant.1.5). The household of Israel declared, "I am black in my own eyes but I am comely in the eyes of my creator," for it is written, "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" In your own eyes you are "as the children of the Ethiopians," but to Me you are as the "children of Israel, saith the Lord."² Have not I brought up Israel etc.,³ "And as for the people, he removed them city by city" (Gen.47.21). Joseph shifted the population in Egypt so that they would all be strangers in their new environs and would therefore not accuse his brothers of being exiles. Similarly, when the Israelites went out of Egypt, the other nations were also removed from their respective lands so that they would not consider the Israelites as being exiles, as it is written, "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?"³

IX.8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saying that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord God etc.,³ Targ. Behold, before the Lord God are revealed the works of the sinful kingdom.

1 Md. Tehillim, Ps.7.
3 Md. ha-Cadol, Gen.,695.

2 Cant.R.,1.

IX.9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift
the house of Israel among all the nations, like
as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the
least grain fall upon the earth.

For, lo, I will command etc.⁷ Happy is Israel wherever she dwells. Though
the people of Israel are tormented in the four corners of the world, from
North to South and from South to North, from East to West and from West
to East, they nevertheless remain in the center, as it is said, "For, lo,
I will command. . . .yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."
If the verse had read "And a grain shall fall upon the earth," then "my
heart within me is broken, all my bones shake" (Jer.23.9), for I would
have said, and a grain shall fall upon the earth and be trampled upon in
the same manner as the rest of the earth. But since it is said, "Yet
shall not the least grain fall upon the earth"--though one may shake the
sieve containing the grain in all directions, the grain nevertheless remains
in the center of the sieve. So it is with the people of Israel; though
they are tormented in the four corners of heaven, they nevertheless remain
in the center."¹

IX.10 All the sinners of My people shall die by the
sword, that say: 'The evil shall not overtake nor con-
front us.'

All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword⁷ It was predestined
that Israel become enslaved even if there had not arisen a Pharaoh in

* They do not perish but live on eternally--Yeshuoth Ya'akob.
1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba,5.

Egypt, for it is said, "And shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Gen.15.13); It was predestined that Israel worship heathen deities even if Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had not arisen, for it is said, "And this people will rise up, and go astray after the foreign gods of the land" (Deut.31.16); It was predestined that Israel die by the sword even if "so and so" had not arisen, for it is said, "All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword."¹

God tests Israel to see whether she will repent. First He brings punishment upon the nations, as it is said, "I have cut off nations, their corners are desolate. . . .I said: 'Surely thou wilt fear Me, thou wilt receive correction'" (Zeph.3.6-7). If she amends, it is good; but if not, He reduces her wealth, as it is said, "Strangers have devoured his strength" etc. (Hos.7.9). If she amends, it is good; but if not, God brings evil upon one of the cities of Israel, as it is said, "Therefore He poured upon him the fury of His anger. . . .and it burned him" (Isa.42.25). If she repents, it is good; but if not, it is written, "In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die" (Num.14.35). And no one shall say, "The evil will not come upon me;" let it be known to him that he will die, for it is said, "All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, that say: 'The evil shall not overtake nor confront us!'"²

It is said concerning the latter generation, "All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword" etc.; but following that it is written,

1 Semahoth, 8.

2 Tanhuma, Behar, 3.

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." (Amos 9.11).¹

IX.11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.

In that day will I raise up etc.⁷ Targ. Then I will establish the kingdom of the house of David that is fallen and I shall build their cities and establish their congregations and it will rule over the entire kingdom and utterly destroy numerous armies and it shall be built and completed as in the days of old.

See Commentary on 2.11, p. 70; 4.1, p.81 ; 4.3, p.83 ; 5.2, p.108; 9.10. xx

In that day will I raise up etc.⁷ R. Nahman said to R. Isaac: "Have you heard when Bar Nafle" will come?" "Who is Bar Nafle?" he asked. "Messiah," he replied. "Do you call Messiah Bar Nafle?" "Yes, for it is written, 'In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David ha-nofeleth' (that is fallen)."²

"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen. 40.23). The chief butler has forgotten you but I shall not forget you.

1 Seder Eliyyahu Rabba, 6.
2 Sanhedrin, 96b-97a.

* Lit., 'son of the fallen'.

Who was anxious for Abraham and Sarah who were old that a son shall be born to them? . . . Who was anxious for David that he should be king unto the end of generations? . . . Who was anxious for Israel in the days of Haman that God should deliver them? . . . Who was anxious for the tabernacle of David that is fallen that God shall restore it, as it is said, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David," that the whole world shall become one brotherhood, as it is said, "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph.3.9).¹

"In Judah is God known" (Ps.76.2). When will God be known in Judah? When You will raise up that tabernacle concerning which You have said, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen."²

IX.13 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

And all the hills shall melt⁷ Targ. And all the hills shall be tilled. See commentary on 4.1.p.91.

Behold, the days come etc.⁷ "Then Judah came near unto him" (Gen.44.18). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper" etc. "The plowman" refers to Judah; "the reaper" refers to

1 Gen. R.,88.

2 Md. Tehillim, Ps.76.

Joseph, as it is said, "For, behold, we were binding sheaves" (Gen.37.7); "and the treader of grapes" refers to Judah, as it is said, "For I trod (dorakti*) Judah for Me (Zech.9.13); "him that soweth seed (bemoshak)" refers to Joseph, shemoshak (for he drew) the seed of his father and brought them down to Egypt, as it is written, "I drew them with cords of a man" (Hos.11.4); "and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" refers to the tribes.¹

"The oxen were plowing (horshoth)" (Job 1.14). We deduce from this verse that God gave Job an inkling of the world to come, as it is said, "The plowman (boresh) shall overtake the reaper."²

"And the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time" (Lev.26.5). They shall be busy with the vintage until the time for sowing has arrived, and thus it is said of the future, "Behold the days come. . . and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed."³

"When Israel came forth out of Egypt" (Ps.114.1). The congregation of Israel addresses itself to God as follows: Master of the universe! Each one of the earlier prophets prophesied good tidings, but as yet we have seen nothing of them. Jeremiah said: "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together" (31.13); Hosea said: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea" (2.1); Joel said: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains

* The same Hebrew word is used as for treader of grapes.

1 Gen.R.,93. 2 Lev.R.,17. Cf.Ruth R.,2; Pesikta Rabbati,17; Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.66.

3 Md. ha-Gadol, Lev.,p.658.

shall drop down sweet wine" (4.18); Amos said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper." The Divine Spirit replies and says: When I revealed Myself to your father Abraham and said to him, "And shall serve them; and they shall afflict them" (Gen.15.13), did I tell him that I would divide the sea for them or that I would cause the manna to fall? Seeing, then, that I have given them things that I did not say I would give them, surely I shall give them the things that I did say I would give them.¹

IX.14 And I will turn the captivity of My people
Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and
inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and
drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens,
and eat the fruit of them.

See commentary on 5.16, p. 120.

And I will turn the captivity of My people Israel/ Judah, an Ammonite proselyte, entered the Beth Hamidrash (academy) and asked whether he would be permitted to enter the congregation (i.e. whether he would be considered as a full-fledged Jew). R.Gamliel said to him, "You are not permitted to enter the congregation;" R.Joshua said to him, "You are permitted to enter the congregation." R.Gamliel said to R.Joshua, "Has it not been said, 'An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord?'" (Deut.23.4). R.Joshua replied: "Do the Ammonites and Moabites dwell in their own land? Has not Sennacherib, the king of

Assyria, arisen long ago and mixed up all the nations? as it is said, 'In that I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and have brought down as one mighty the inhabitants' (Isa. 10.13), and whoever comes out ^{of} a mixed multitude, is presumed to have come from the majority.*" R.Gamliel said to R.Joshua, "Has it not been said: 'But afterward I will bring back the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord' (Jer.49.6), and they have already returned." R.Joshua replied: "Has it not been said: 'And I will turn the captivity of My people Israel,' but as yet they have not returned."** They permitted him at once to enter the congregation.¹

IX.15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

See commentary on 4.3, p.93.

And I will plant them upon their land⁷ "Thou bringest them in and plantest them" (Ex.15.17)--a plantation in which there is no tearing down, as it is said, "And I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up" (Jer.24.6), and as it is also said, "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up."²

* The majority of people are not Ammonites or Moabites. The chances are, therefore, that he belongs to the majority and is not an Ammonite at all.

** Just as the Israelites have not yet returned, so the Ammonites have not yet returned (Hagahoth ha-Gera).

1 Tosefta, Yadayim, II,8. Cf. Berakoth, 28a.

2 Mekilta, 43b.

God said to Israel: In this world you have been planted by Moses and Joshua; just as a human being passes away, so his plantations pass away. In the future, however, it shall be I who will plant you; just as I live on eternally, so my plantations will live on eternally, as it is said, "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land."¹

God said: In this world everybody (i.e. all Israelites) had a longing for the land of Israel, but because of the sins that you have committed you have been exiled therefrom. In the future, however, when you will be without sin and without transgression, I shall plant you therein a plantation of peace and security, as it is said, "And I will plant them upon their land" etc.²

R.Nehemiah said in the name of R.Abun: The nations of the world have no plantation, no sowing, and no rootage, and all three things may be derived from a single verse: "Scarce are they planted, scarce are they sown, scarce hath their stock taken root in the earth" (Isa.40:34). Israel, on the other hand, has plantation, as it is said, "And I will plant them in this land" etc. (Jer.32:41), and as it is also said, "And I will plant them upon their land;" she has sowing, as it is said, "And I will sow her unto Me in the land" (Hos.2:25); she has rootage, as it is said, "In days to come shall Jacob take root" (Isa.27:6).³

†

1 Yalkut, I, 351. The source of the Yalkut is at present unknown to the author. It may come from a Midrash that is no longer extant.

2 Deut. R., 3.

3 Cant., R., 7.

"If ye walk in My statutes" (Lev.26.3). This is as it is said, "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him" (Hos.9.17). God said: "I said that you will live in peace, as it is said, "And I will plant them upon their land" etc. But when will this be? Only "if ye walk in My statutes."¹

"Three years shall it be as forbidden unto you"(Lev.19.23). God said to Israel: If you have been enslaved by three kingdoms you shall not yet await redemption. "It shall not be eaten" (ibid)--not until the fourth year can it be redeemed. "You may eat of the fruit thereof" (ibid 19.25)--for with the fourth kingdom will come redemption.* Said R.Yanai: This is as it is written: "For three things the earth doth quake, and for four it cannot endure" (Prov.30.21). God could not, as it were, extend any longer the enslavement of Israel; He will therefore redeem them at once and plant them in their own land, as it is said, "And I will plant them upon their land."²

"Thou bringest them in, and plantest them in the mountains of Thine inheritance" (Exod.15.17). God said to Moses, "He who has brought them out (of Egypt) shall bring them in (to Canaan). As you live, according to your words, so it shall be. In this world you shall bring them in,** but in the next world I will plant them a true plantation that they shall no more be plucked up out of their land, as it is said, "And I will plant

1 Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Behukosai, 55a. * Just as the fruit of the trees is redeemed and then eaten in the fourth year so Israel will not be redeemed until after it has been enslaved by four kingdoms.

2 Supplement to Md.Yelamdenu, Beth ha-Midrash, VI, p.87.

** The commentator on the Midrash, R.David Luria, explains that this was said prior to the decree prohibiting Moses from leading the children of Israel into Canaan.

them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land,' and as it is also said, 'The Lord shall reign for ever and ever' (Exod.15.18)."¹

And they shall no more be plucked up etc.⁷ "And the Lord rooted them out (wayitshem) of their land" (Deut.29.27). By wayitshem is meant tash he'lam (they were deprived of their worldly possessions); they would sow and toil but the nations of the world would come and take everything away from them, as it is said, "And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east; they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the produce of the earth," (Judg.6.3-4). But when they will repent, "They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat" (Isa. 65.22). This will be because they will plant and none shall tear out, as it is said, "And they shall no more be plucked up out of their land."²

¹ Pirke R. Eliezer, 42.

² Tanhuma, Kedoshim, 11. Cf. Tanhuma, ed. Bub., Kedoshim, 39b.

Chapter V

A Critique of the Rabbinic Interpretations of Amos

In the previous chapter we presented the various Rabbinic interpretations of each verse in the Book of Amos, culled from the whole area of Rabbinic literature, commenting only when it was felt that such comment was necessary for the clarification of the Rabbinic passages. In the present chapter it shall be our aim to give a critical review and analysis of the various Rabbinic interpretations with a view to determining the contributions that the Rabbis made to the understanding of the text of Amos and to consider also, what, if any, were their limitations.

Probably one of the first things that strikes the reader, as he peruses the various Rabbinic interpretations, is their utter lack of unity. It does not take one long to discover that in most instances there is no connecting link between the interpretations of one verse and those of the following verse. In fact even the various interpretations of a single verse are wholly independent and have nothing in common with one another. This is entirely understandable in the light of what we said regarding the development of the Oral Law in our opening chapter. It was pointed out, it will be recalled, that here there are represented hundreds of Tannaim and Amoraim, living over a space of nearly a thousand years, each one expounding Scripture in accordance with his own ideas and the traditions that were imparted to him by his teachers. We also saw in the same chapter that a Biblical verse is not necessarily limited to a single interpretation, but that just as the hammer may cause numerous sparks when it strikes a rock, so one verse in Scripture may have many interpretations, all of which

may be authentic and "the words of the living God."¹ Consequently, each interpretation is a unit in itself and need not bear any relationship to other interpretations.

Before we begin with our critical analysis of the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos, we should like to make a few general observations that may be of interest to the reader. First, of the 146 verses contained in the Book of Amos, there are fifty-three, or a little more than a third, that are entirely without Rabbinic comment in either of the two Talmuds or in any of the Midrashim. That does not include Targum Jonathan which is primarily a translation and not a commentary, though we have seen that frequently it interprets the verse rather than translates it. Particularly singular and striking in this connection is the fact that among the 53 verses that are altogether without Rabbinic comment is verse 5.24 ("But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream"), the verse that is universally regarded by modern Bible scholars as the finest in the entire Book of Amos and one of the gems in Old Testament literature. Why the Rabbis did not see fit to comment on this outstanding verse we are not prepared to say. All we can say is that they simply had no occasion to comment on it or quote from it, which is illustrative of the fact that what we have in the Rabbinic literature on Amos is not really a commentary as such, but merely a vast number of independent comments on, and interpretations of various verses in Amos, scattered throughout the Talmuds and Midrashim.

¹ See above, p. 6.

The second observation that we should like to make is that whereas in the Babylonian Talmud there are approximately seventy-five references to the Book of Amos, in the Palestinian Talmud there are only thirteen such references. This is not surprising, however, in the light of the fact that the Babylonian Talmud has much more bulk than the Palestinian one and that there is particularly much more Haggadah in the former than in the latter. It will be noted, however, that the vast majority of the references to Amos in Rabbinic literature are to be found in the Midrashim and not in the Talmuds. This is due to the fact that the Talmuds are predominantly halakic and the discussions they contain are usually based on the legal portions of the Pentateuch. The Midrashim, on the other hand, are chiefly haggadic (with the exception of the tannaitic Midrashim) and therefore have more occasion to draw on the prophetic books and those of the Hagiographa.

As we proceed with our task of analyzing critically the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos we can readily see that these interpretations fall into the following classifications: 1) halakic, 2) haggadic, 3) philological, 4) proof texts. The haggadic interpretations may be subdivided into the following groups: 1) historical, 2) homiletical, 3) exegetical, 4) mystical, and 5) messianic and eschatological.

There is no need to discuss each one of the halakic interpretations. Suffice it to say that they are all made in accordance with the hermeneutic principles that we discussed in our second chapter. A typical illustration of a halakic interpretation is one that is given on the words "And I will turn your feasts into mourning" (8.10). By applying the hermeneutic principle of Hekekeh (analogy), the Rabbis deduce from this clause

that a person who is in mourning is forbidden to do any manner of work. The analogy is drawn from the word 'feasts.' Just as it is forbidden to do any work on the festival, so it is forbidden to do any work when one is in mourning. Furthermore, by means of the *Heckesh* the Rabbis deduce also from the same clause that the period of mourning lasts seven days, for that is the length of time that the festival lasts. To those who are unfamiliar with the Rabbinic methods of exegesis such deductions will appear forced and far-fetched. Once we familiarize ourselves, however, with the principles of interpretations that they employed, the conclusions that they draw will seem more inherent in the text.

We have already seen in the opening chapter that the Rabbinic literature consists of two main streams: *Halakah* and *Haggadah*. Whatever is not *Halakah*, therefore, belongs to the realm of *Haggadah*. But before we begin to analyze critically the haggadic interpretations of Amos we must first have a comprehensive understanding of the true nature of *Haggadah*. Unless we have such an understanding much of what is contained in the *Haggadah* will appear to us grotesque, ludicrous and fantastic. Above all, we must not make the mistake of judging a literature that was produced in the Orient many centuries ago by our own modern and Western standards. We must realize that it was characteristic of the ancients in the Orient to indulge in exaggerations, hyperbolic expressions and fantastic tales. Consequently, we should not be surprised to find that the haggadic literature abounds in fanciful and highly imaginative tales, in hyperbolic aphorisms, in metaphors, parables, and allegories.

The grave danger in reading the *Haggadah* lies in that we are apt to accept literally what was intended to be interpreted metaphorically or

allegorically. Solomon Schechter in his discussion of the "strange or even repugnant" character of the haggadic literature says, "The greatest fault to be found with those who wrote down such passages as appear objectionable to us is, perhaps, that they did not observe the wise rule of Johnson, who said to Boswell on a certain occasion, 'Let us get serious, for there comes a fool!'"¹ Much of what is contained in the Haggadah was never meant to be taken seriously. In their wildest dream, for example, they could not have meant it seriously when they related that on one occasion the river Ginnai talked back to R. Pinhas ben Jair when he asked it to divide its waters because he wanted to get over to the other side.² Examples such as this could be multiplied a hundred-fold.

It is true that in all ages there were credulous people who accepted all the Talmudic and Midrashic narratives in their literal sense, but as far back as the 12th century we already find that Maimonides either explained away or rejected the Haggadah in the Talmud. Even Nahmanides (13th century), who accepted the narratives of the Talmud, conceded that many haggadic sayings were to be regarded merely as rhetorical metaphors or homiletical material, and that one was not religiously bound to accept them literally.³

It should be realized furthermore, that the Rabbis frequently expounded Scripture for purposes of edification, consolation and exhortation. Any moral or religious truth was corroborated by 'searching out' the

1 Studies In Judaism, vol. 1, p. 197.

2 Hulin, 7a.

3 Graetz, History of the Jews, vol. 3, pp. 523, 533-35.

Scriptures. It was firmly held that all eternal truths, all moral and spiritual teachings were implicit in the Scriptures. In order that the validity of these truths and teachings should not be questioned as they had been by the Sadducees, they always sought to give them Biblical 'support.' To achieve this end the plain and simple meaning was not always adequate. Consequently, the plain meaning or Peshat was supplemented by three other methods of exegesis: Derash (homiletical interpretation), Remez (allegorical explanation) and Sod (esoteric teaching).

It should be clear that because the Rabbis resorted to Derash, Remez, or Sod in interpreting Scripture, it does not follow that they therefore abandoned Peshat or the simple meaning of a Biblical verse. Reference was already made to the rule laid down by the Rabbis that "the plain meaning of a verse must never be lost sight of."¹ The Rabbis maintained, however, that the Biblical verse meant more than was apparent on the surface and that hidden meanings could be derived from the text by applying the various principles of hermeneutics. In other words, the Rabbis would say to us, "Verily, the verse means as you say (i.e. the literal meaning), but that is not all that it means. There are various other meanings that the verse may convey." In fact, the Rabbis taught that it was a meritorious act to search the Scriptures and derive therefrom new truths and new teachings that lay hidden within it, as they said "Search (the Scriptures) and you will be rewarded."²

1 See above, p. 31.

2 Sanhedrin, 51b and elsewhere.

A good illustration of the manner in which they searched the Scriptures, even if it meant making deductions that were most fantastic, was the assertion that R. Isaac made to R. Nahman, that the patriarch Jacob is not dead. When R. Nahman objected and said: Was it in vain that they mourned him and embalmed him? R. Isaac replied (as if to say, Why do you argue with me?): I am expounding Scripture, for it is said, "Therefore fear thou not, O Jacob My servant. . . and thy seed from the land of their captivity" (Jer.30.10). Thus an analogy (Heckeah) is drawn between Jacob and his children--just as his children are still living so is he still living.¹

As we proceed, therefore, with our critical review of the haggadic interpretations of Amos and seek to compare them with those of modern scholars, we must take into account the Rabbinic conception of Scriptures and the various methods of exegesis that they employ in interpreting it. We may sum up the essential difference between the Rabbinic interpretation of Scriptures and that of modern scholars by saying that whereas the modern scholars were merely concerned with determining the Peshat or plain meaning of the verse, the Rabbis frequently sought to discover hidden meanings that are inherent in the verse and which may be given in addition to the simple meaning.

We have already seen that the haggadic interpretations may be classified into various categories. Many of these interpretations may well be compared with those of modern preachers. We shall now consider each one of these separately. A common type among the haggadic interpretations is the historical interpretation. From the point of view of the Rabbis the

1 Ta'anith, 5b.

prophets did not think of Israel merely in terms of their own generation but rather took a long range view of Israel which included all previous generations as well as future generations. Many examples can be given to justify this point of view, for we find that the prophets frequently made references to the early history of Israel, particularly to the patriarchal age, the exodus from Egypt, and the sojourn in the wilderness.¹ Similarly, it was characteristic of the prophets to speak not only of the immediate future but of "the end of days."² Israel, from the point of view of the Rabbis, is an eternal people and its destiny is inextricably bound up with its entire past and future, including the days of the Messiah. The prophets are therefore constantly making references to historical events (both past and future) that affect the well-being of Israel. Sometimes this is done directly but frequently it is done metaphorically or by allegory. Moreover, the fact that the context does not suggest the interpretation that the Rabbis give is inconsequential. From their point of view the prophet may refer to one thing in one phrase and to an entirely different matter in the next phrase within the same verse.

Now that we have seen what the nature of the haggadic interpretations is in general, let us consider the historical interpretations of Amos found in the Haggadah. In verse 1.9 we read: "And remembered not the brotherly covenant." Modern scholars are puzzled as to what covenant the prophet is referring. William Harper states that "the covenant alluded

1 Cf. Isa. 51.2; Jer. 2.2; Hos. 11.1; Am. 2.10.

2 Cf. Isa. 2.2; Micah 4.1; Jer. 23.20; Ezek. 38.16.

to is wholly unknown."¹ Some suggest that the reference may be to the covenant that was made between Hiram, King of Tyre and Solomon (1K.5.12).² Utterly disregarding the context, R.Simeon says that the prophet is referring to the brotherly covenant between Moses and Aaron, though there is no mention anywhere that such a covenant had ever been made.³ Reference is made to this verse in Amos presumably because nowhere else in Scriptures does the expression 'brotherly covenant' occur.

In verse 1.11 we have a good illustration of a single verse referring to various historical events that have no connection whatever with one another or with the context in which the verse is found. According to the Mishnah R.Elizer "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword" refers to Esau who sought to kill Jacob; "And did cast off all pity" refers to Esau when he attempted to kill his mother; "And his anger did tear perpetually" refers to Amalek who attacked the people of Israel shortly after they had come out of Egypt; "And he kept his wrath forever" refers to Haman who plotted to kill the Jews of the Persian empire.⁴ What the Rabbis did was to select the arch-enemies of Israel in various periods of her history and make them the objects of God's wrath. They did not do this arbitrarily, however, but derived it all from the word 'Edom'. Esau was the progenitor of the Edomites and the two names are used synonymously, as we read in Gen.36.1: "Now these are the generations of Esau--the same

1 I.C.C., Amos and Hosea, p.31.

3 See above, p. 57.

2 Cripps, The Book of Amos, p.128.

4 See above, pp.58-60.

is Edom." Haman, according to tradition, was an Amalekite¹ and Amalek was the grandson of Esau.² The fact that Amos should make reference to an event that took place long after his death is not to be wondered at, for God "revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets."

Harper believes that this oracle against Edom is an interpolation from the exilic or post-exilic period.³ One of the reasons he advances is that for two centuries before Amos Edom was subject to Israel. Consequently Israel could not have suffered from Edom in the days of Amos. Perhaps this is the reason why the Rabbis interpret the verse as referring to other periods in Israel's history and not to the contemporary scene. According to Midrash Tehillim the reference is to the Edomites of the days of Moses,⁴ for concerning them we have a clear illustration of brutality (See Num.20.18).

In verse 2.6 we read: "Because they sell the righteous for silver" etc. According to the Rabbinic interpretation Amos is not referring to the nation as a whole, nor to the judges, nor to the creditors as modern scholars suggest, but to a particular episode that had taken place many centuries earlier. It was to the sale of Joseph by his brothers for twenty shekels of silver that the allusion was made (Gen.37.28).⁵ Joseph is referred to as a gadiq gamur (completely righteous) by the Rabbis⁶ because he resisted the allurements of Potiphar's wife (Gen.39.7-12).⁷ The

1 See Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, 6; Cf. *Aggadath Esther*, ed. Dub., p.26.

2 See Gen., 36.12.

3 Id., p.31.

4 See above, p.58.

5 See above, p.63.

6 Kethubboth, 111a.

7 Sotah, 43a.

act of selling Joseph for twenty pieces of silver was certainly outrageous. When the prophet therefore speaks of a zadik (a righteous man) being sold for silver, the Rabbis conclude that the reference must be to Joseph. "For three transgressions of Israel," therefore, refers not to (or not only to) Israel of his own day but (also) to the sons of Jacob, otherwise known as Israel.

In verse 3.8 the prophet says "The lion hath roared who will not fear." Modern scholars are inclined to believe that the reference here is to the Assyrians. Cripps says, "Certainly the 'lion' is not Jehovah."¹ According to the Rabbis, however, the reference is precisely to God.² Nor is this the only instance in which we find that God's roar is compared to that of a lion.³ The fact that Amos refers to God as roaring from Zion (1.2) lends support to the Rabbinic interpretation. More specifically, the Rabbis state that Amos has reference to the great historical event when God descended upon Mt. Sinai to proclaim the ten commandments. On that occasion the sound that came forth from God was so loud and awesome that not only the people trembled⁴ but even the mountain quaked.⁵

According to one Rabbinic interpretation Amos is referring to another important event in Jewish history, one that took place more than a century after the period of Amos. The roar that God let out was one of deep anguish, and came as a result of the destruction of the Temple which was God's house. It was this tragic event which brought forth from Nahum

1 Id., p.157.

2 See above, p.81.

3 Cf. Hos.11.10.

4 Exod.19.16.

5 Exod.19.18.

not of selling Joseph's bones of silver and certainly not of silver.
 When the subject of the bones of Joseph is mentioned in the Bible
 for silver, the Bible says that the reference was to Joseph's
 for silver, the Bible says that the reference was to Joseph's
 only to himself of his own day (also) to the same of Joseph, otherwise
 known as Israel.
 In verse 2.8 the subject was the man who will not
 know. The subject was inclined to believe that the reference was
 to the Egyptian, especially, "certainly the 'man' is not Joseph."
 according to the Bible, however, the reference is to Joseph.
 for is this the only instance in which we find that God's word is
 to that of a man. The fact that God refers to him as Joseph
 (2.8) is a subject to the Bible's investigation. When the Bible
 the Bible states that God has reference to the great historical event
 after the resurrection of the dead to provide the two circumstances. On
 that occasion the words that came forth from God were no more than
 that not only the words were fulfilled, but even the words were
 according to one Bible's later revelation was in referring to Joseph.
 important event in Jewish history, and that took place more than a century
 after the period of the Bible. The fact that God did not say one of the
 words, and even as a result of the destruction of the Temple which was
 God's house. It was this event which brought forth the words

the utterance, "Where is the den of the lions" (2.12).¹

The next historical reference is in verse 4.13 ("For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind"). In the opinion of the Rabbis, Amos is here referring to the original act of creation and not to the continuous formations of natural phenomena. Cripps points out that the Hebrew participle may refer to either the past or the present.² According to R. Joseph, however, the participle 'bo're' (created) refers only to the past.³ He brings proof for this from Isa. 42.5: "He that created (bo're) the heavens, and stretched them forth." The latter part of our verse ("And treadeth upon the high places of the earth") also has reference to the original days of creation when God pressed down upon the waters so that the sea may receive them.⁴

According to the Rabbis the dirge which Amos took up against Israel in verse 5.1 was not in anticipation of Israel's destruction, as modern scholars interpret it, but was uttered after the ten tribes had already gone into captivity.⁵ Judging from the following verse which speaks of Israel as already "fallen", it may well be that the lamentation was uttered after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. At least there is nothing from the Rabbinic point of view which precludes the possibility of such an interpretation. It will be recalled that according to tradition Amos prophesied for a period of thirty years.⁶

1 Ibid. 2 Id., p. 176.

5 See above, pp. 106-107.

3 See above, p. 104.

6 See above, p. 42.

4 See above, p. 106.

In verse 5.8 we read: "That calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." The identical words are repeated in verse 9.6. Modern scholars are not agreed whether the allusion is to the Noachian deluge. According to Cripps "this is improbable." Harper believes that Amos may well be referring to the Deluge, pointing out that the use of the expressions 'call' and 'face of the earth' favor such an interpretation.¹ In the opinion of the Rabbis Amos is referring to two separate inundations, one which occurred in the days of Noah and the other in the days of Enosh. According to another interpretation Amos has reference to the inundation that took place in the days of Enosh and the days of the tower of Babel.² In each case God inundated a large portion of the earth in order to punish the people for their sinfulness. Here again there is nothing which makes such an interpretation impossible. By saying that Amos is alluding to such great historical acts as creation, the Deluge, the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai etc., God is more highly exalted than if he is merely carrying out the routine of the natural order. That Amos is referring to two historical events instead of one because he used the same figure of speech twice, is in keeping with the Rabbinic principle that there are no superfluous words in Scripture.

According to the Midrash the prophecy that "Lamentation shall be in all the broad places" etc. (5.16) was already fulfilled at the time that

1. Id., p. 116.

2 See above, p. 113.

God sent Isaiah to go and comfort Israel.¹ The presumption apparently is that here also Amos was alluding to the fall of Samaria which occurred during the lifetime of Isaiah.

In Isa. 7.8 ^{we} read: "And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people." This figure according to the Midrash cannot be correct for Isaiah made this prophecy during the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz and Samaria fell during the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah who was the son of Ahaz. Since Ahaz reigned about sixteen years the period that elapsed between the time that Isaiah made the prophecy and the fall of Samaria is only eighteen or nineteen years. The Midrash seeks to reconcile this discrepancy by saying that the fall of Samaria was already decreed in the days of Amos "two years before the earthquake" (1.1), as it is said, "For thus Amos saith: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land." (7.11).² But that would mean that Amos began his ministry in 787 B.C. (i.e. sixty-five years prior to the fall of Samaria) and that is inconsistent with the Rabbinic point of view that Amos began to prophesy two years before Uzziah was stricken with leprosy. Authorities are not agreed as to when Uzziah began to reign but the earliest date given is 788 B.C.³ According to some authorities he did not begin to reign until 780 B.C.⁴ It is not at all likely therefore that Amos who ministered

1 See above, p. 120.

2 See above, p. 143.

3 The Jewish Encyclopedia

media, vol. XII, p. 393, Uzziah.

4 Margolis and Marx, A History of the Jewish People, p. 84.

during the reign of Uzziah should have begun to prophesy as early as 787 B.C. Consequently the discrepancy still remains.

In verse 8.9 we read: "I will cause the sun to go down at noon." Modern scholars are inclined to interpret the verse literally and suggest that Amos is probably referring to an eclipse. According to the Rabbis, however, this is nothing more than a figure of speech. What Amos had in mind was some tragic event in the life of the people that would cause great sorrow. Thus R.Johanan states that Amos is alluding to the day in which Josiah, king of Judah, was killed by Necho at Megiddo (2K.23.29).¹ We have already seen that according to the Rabbis the prophets alluded to historical events that occurred long after their own day.

According to the Midrash God brought up the Philistines from Caphtor and Aram from Kir at the same time that He brought up Israel out of Egypt (9.7).² In fact, a general shifting of the entire world population took place at the time of the Exodus. This was done so that the people of Israel would not be looked upon as exiles or aliens. All the people of the world found themselves in exactly the same position as the Israelites. It is quite conceivable that Amos had other nations in mind besides the Philistines and Aram whom God had brought forth from their original homes. There is nothing in the verse, however, to suggest that this occurred at the time that Israel went forth out of Egypt, unless it is the fact that they are all mentioned together.

This concludes our analysis of the historical interpretations of Amos. Admittedly, some of these interpretations appear forced and artificial. But, as we have already observed, this is characteristic of the Midrash

1 See above, p.150.

2 See above, p.165.

which does not interpret the verse according to Peshat or its plain meaning but generally reads into the verse some hidden meaning which is not apparent on the surface. We have also seen how some verses are given several interpretations.

The next group of haggadic interpretations to be discussed is the homiletical. By homiletical we mean those interpretations that possess the quality of edification and inspire one to live a moral and religious life. There are a considerable number of such interpretations of Amos but we shall limit our discussion to but a few of them.

Our first illustration of a homiletic interpretation is from verse 2.7: "That pant after the dust of the earth." Elsewhere we are told that the seed of Jacob will be "as the dust of the earth" (Gen.28.14). The Midrash interprets the above verses to mean that when the people of Israel sin they are trodden upon by the nations of the world as the dust of the earth.

Obviously, that is not the plain meaning of the verse. The Rabbis did not grapple with the textual difficulties that the verse presents. They were primarily interested in preaching to their people that they be loyal to God and that they live a moral life. The words of Amos "That pant after the dust of the earth" were thus utilized by them as a means of warning the people of the tragic consequences of sin and disloyalty to God.

In verse 3.6 we read: "Shall the horn be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?" According to Harper the horn is blown "as a summons to battle, or in order to give alarm against destructive animals (Jeel 2.1)

or against an approaching enemy" (Hos.11.10-11).¹ Gripps concurs that the horn referred to by Amos is a "secular" one "announcing to all inhabitants danger from without." He adds that for religious purposes not the shofar or horn was used but "the straight metal trumpet" (Heb. hazograh). According to the Midrash, however, Amos is referring to the horn which is blown on the Jewish New Year's day, known traditionally as the day of judgment, summoning the people to do penance. Shall the horn be blown on New Year's day and the people not tremble because of the day of judgment?

Gripps is not quite correct in stating that for religious purposes, not the Shofar, but the hazograh was employed. There are several instances where the Shofar was employed in religious ceremonies or for religious occasions as when God revealed Himself on Mt. Sinai to give Israel the Law (Exod. 19.16,19), or on the day of atonement (Levit.25.9).² There is no reason, therefore, why the Shofar could not have been used on New Year's day.

The Rabbinic interpretation of verse 3.8 ("The lion hath roared who will not fear?") has already been included among the historical interpretations of Amos.³ There is, however, a certain amount of overlapping and some of the interpretations may be included in two or more different groups. The above verse, for example, may be included among the historical, allegorical, and homiletical interpretations. We have already seen that historically the reference is to the giving of the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai. Al-

1 Id., p.71.

2 Cf. 11 Sam. 6.15; 1 Chron. 15.28; Ps.98.6.

3 See above, p.185.

legorically, the lion in our verse is the symbol of God. Now, let us see how the verse was interpreted by the Rabbis homiletically. "The lion hath roared who will not fear?" When God gave utterance to the ten commandments, the people trembled at his voice and the whole mountain quaked. If this was so when God's words were intended to give life to the people, how much more will the earth tremble when He comes to bring judgment upon the sinners who transgress the teachings of the Torah.

Perhaps the most common type of haggadic interpretation is the exegetical. It is here that the peculiar and characteristic method of the Rabbis manifests itself most strikingly and most poignantly. But before we present some illustrations of this type of interpretation we must once again stress the fact that by interpreting a passage 'midrashically,' the Rabbis did not relinquish its simple or literal meaning. The midrashic interpretation merely supplements but does not supplant the plain meaning of the passage. It is true that frequently the midrashic interpretation is extremely farfetched and at times even conveys the exact opposite meaning from what the prophet seems to convey, but generally speaking the motive behind these interpretations was wholesome and benevolent. What the Rabbis sought to do was to read into the words of Scripture messages of hope and comfort to a people whose outlook on life had become dark and dismal. The persecutions which they suffered, first at the hands of the Greeks, and then by the Romans, cast the people into a state of hopelessness and depression. In order to save them from this unhappy state, a message of hope and cheer had to be forthcoming. But such a message could not be

effective in bringing about the desired results unless it were rooted in Scripture and shown to be derived therefrom. The Rabbis had to prove to the people that God Himself through "His servants the prophets," had promised redemption and restoration. Only then could the people be saved from utter gloom and despair.

It is true that not all exegetical interpretations were intended to instill hope and comfort but in most instances the motive of such interpretations was the moral improvement and general well-being of Israel. At times the interpretations were unfavorable to other nations but these were heathens and therefore, from the Rabbinic point of view, were deserving of harsh treatment. For that matter Israel is not always spared by the Rabbis either but are often censured for moral laxity and departure from the precepts of the Law.

Our first example of exegetical interpretations will illustrate the point at hand. In verse 2.7 we read: "That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor." The philological aspects of sho'afim, pant will be discussed later. Suffice it to say at this point that the Rabbis give the word its other meaning which is to tread, crush or trample upon. Furthermore, instead of in the active voice they interpret it in the passive, trodden. When the people of Israel sin, say the Rabbis, they are trodden upon by the nations in the same manner as "the dust of the earth."¹ They lend support to this interpretation by showing that the

1 See above, p. 65.

same simile is employed elsewhere: "For the king of Aram destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing" (2K.13.7).

In verse 2.16 ("And he that is courageous. . . shall flee away naked") the Targum anticipates the interpretation of modern scholars by saying that he shall flee away "stripped of his armour."

In verse 3.2 ("You only have I known" etc.) we have an example of where the Rabbis give an opposite meaning from the usual exegesis. According to the usual exegesis, as given by modern scholars, Amos is saying that God will be more severe with Israel than with the other nations. This will be so because of the special privileges that Israel enjoyed. The Rabbis, however, interpret the verse to mean that God is going to be more lenient with Israel than with the other nations.¹ Rashi points out that nakad, to visit, implies gradual visitation. It seems apparent that the context implies severity in God's relationship to Israel rather than a spirit of leniency. But, undoubtedly, it must have been the conditions under which the people lived which prompted the Rabbis to interpret the verse as they did. It should be noted that in one source the Rabbinic interpretation is more like that of the usual interpretation, only instead of referring to Israel as a whole, it is said to refer to the scholars in Israel.² God will be more severe with the scholars because they are better qualified to interpret the will of God.

1 See above, pp. 72-74.

2 See above, p. 72.

Most modern scholars are agreed that "the winter-house with the summer-house" to which Amos referred in verse 3.15 represent two separate buildings. There are some scholars, however, who maintain that Amos was referring to a single building that has two departments, one of which was a 'cool upper storey' for summer use, such as is referred to in Judg.3.20.¹ In rabbinic literature all are agreed that the wealthy people had separate buildings for summer and winter use. They disagreed only as to the number of summer-houses and winter-houses that they possessed, some saying that they had one of each, others that they had two of each, and according to a third opinion that they had three of each.² As far "the houses of ivory" that will perish, the Targum anticipated the interpretation of modern scholars when he said that the houses were 'inlaid with ivory.'

In verse 4.1 we read "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan." Most modern scholars are of the opinion that the reference is to the women of Samaria. Gripps points out, however, that because there are "several masculine genders in this verse, some have interpreted this expression as referring to men, perhaps the judges and nobility."³ The latter interpretation was anticipated both by the Targum and the Midrash. The former interprets the expression as referring to the wealthy while the latter states that the reference is to the courts of justice (i.e. the judges).⁴ In the Talmud, on the other hand, Rabe interprets it as refer-

1 Gripps, Book of Amos, p.164.

2 See above p. 88.

3 Id., p.165.

ring to the women.¹

The interpretation which the Babylonian Talmud says was given in Palestine to the words "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise" (5.2), is one of the most striking examples in Amos of a verse being given the exact opposite meaning from what was apparently intended by the prophet. According to the Palestinian interpretation Amos said, "She has fallen, but she shall not continue (to fall again); rise, O virgin of Israel!"² The interpretation is really quite an ingenious one because there is no violation of the text involved. It is entirely a matter of punctuation, of where the comma belongs. Instead of pausing after the word 'kum,' the Palestinians said we should pause after the word 'tho'sif.'

But more important than the manner in which they arrived at this interpretation, is the motive which prompted them to interpret the verse as they did. What we can see in this interpretation is another attempt on the part of the Rabbis to instil hope in the hearts of the people in the future of Israel and to save them from falling into utter despair. This will explain also why this particular interpretation was given in Palestine and not in Babylonia. It is an historical fact that the Jews lived more happily and more prosperously in Babylonia, under the rule of the Babylonians and Persians, than they did in Palestine, under the rule

1 See above, p. 90.

2 See above, p. 107.

of the Greeks and Romans. The need for strengthening the morale of the people was consequently much more poignant in Palestine than in Babylonia. The scholars of Palestine felt that the verse could not be interpreted to mean that Israel is fallen, never to rise again, because that was contrary to the whole Jewish tradition. Israel may fall for a certain period of time but not permanently. In the same spirit the Targum says that Israel "shall not rise any more this year." But to entertain the thought that the fall of Israel might be of a permanent character was nothing short of heresy.

The Midrash derived more comfort for the people of Israel in their intense suffering and persecution from the words "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! . . . It is darkness and not light" (5.18). The reference, according to the Midrash, is not to Israel but to the other nations (i.e. to those who persecute Israel).¹ For Israel the day of the Lord will be a day of light but for the other nations it will be a day of darkness. Interpretations such as this ^{of} prophetic utterances must have gone a long way toward dispelling the gloom and despair which prevailed over a period of many years of oppression and misery. We know that when the people of Israel were in need of comfort the exilic and post-exilic prophets spoke of "the day of the Lord," or its equivalent, as the day in which God would punish the enemies of Israel.² The same meaning was accordingly carried over to this expression, as it was used by Amos, though from the context it seems quite evident that Amos was addressing himself to his

1 See above, p.122.

2 Cf. Ezek. chs. XXXVIII and XXXIX; Isa.13.3-22; Obad.v.15.

own people and not to the other nations.

It is interesting to observe how the Rabbis frequently 'wrestled' with the same verses with which modern scholars had difficulty in interpreting, and to see how they got around the difficulty in their own unique way. Modern scholars offer various opinions as to what Amos meant when he said, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (5.25). Some suggest that they offered sacrifices to idols but none to God; others, that they offered required sacrifices, but no free-will offerings; a third opinion is that they offered no sacrifices at all.¹

The Rabbis, too, saw the difficulty in the question that Amos presented. Thus they said: We cannot say that they offered sacrifices in the wilderness for it is written, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices" etc? On the other hand, it is impossible to say that no sacrifices were offered in the wilderness, for it is expressly stated: "And they kept the pass-over in the first month" etc. (Num.9.5). We therefore derive from this discrepancy, the Midrash continues, that throughout the forty years all congregational sacrifices were offered by the tribe of Levi.² According to the Midrash the tribe of Levi was the only tribe that was permitted to offer sacrifices because all the others had participated in the worship of the golden calf, for which reason their offerings were undesirable and unacceptable.

1 I.O.G., Amos and Hosea, p.136.

2 See above, p.125.

It therefore appears from this Midrash that the same situation prevailed in the days of Amos. Not that God had no desire in sacrifices altogether but that they were unacceptable to him when offered by people who did not live in accordance with the teachings of the Torah. Thus according to the Midrash Amos argued in the name of God as follows: "Did you bring offerings to Me in the wilderness after you had sinned against Me? You knew then that I would not accept them. The same is true to-day. Not until you forsake your evil ways and fulfill the precepts of the Law will your offerings be acceptable to Me.

In 9.2-3 Amos points out that it will be impossible to escape the Divine wrath when the day of judgment comes. It seems perfectly clear from the context that the allusion is to the people of Israel who went after other gods and forsook the God of their forefathers. In fact, the reference is so obvious that there is no discussion on it by modern Bible scholars. The Rabbis, however, in keeping with some of the interpretations that have already been discussed above, interpret these verses to apply to the heathens, who on the day of judgment will come fortified with their heathen deities, thinking that the latter will be able to save them. When after God will have destroyed their deities they will seek to escape in the netherworld, on the top of Carmel, or in the sea, they will discover that there is no escape for them.

The above interpretation of the Midrash is but one more illustration of the Rabbis seeking to hearten and console a people that had suffered all kinds of hardships and indignities. It would be very simple to lay

aside the midrashic interpretation and ask: By what right did the Rabbis say that the above verses referred to the heathens and not to Israel? Before we judge them too harshly, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that the conditions under which the Jewish people lived during the days of the Rabbis, particularly at the time of the Hadrianic persecutions, were wholly different from what they were in the days of Amos when the people of Israel enjoyed unparalleled prosperity, peace and a sense of security. In the days of Amos the social life of the people was characterized by self-indulgence, violence, and immorality. To them, therefore, Amos had to pronounce judgment and doom. In the days of the Rabbis, however, the people were in desperate need of a different kind of message--a message of comfort and hope. But the message had to have its roots in Scripture. The words of the prophet consequently had to be reinterpreted so that they may be applied to the changed conditions under which the Jewish people lived during the early centuries of the Christian era. No doubt the suffering of the people at the hands of the heathens must have embittered their hearts so that they looked forward to the day when God, who alone could help them, would take vengeance upon their oppressors.

This brings us to our final illustration of exegetical interpretations. In 9.7 we read: "Are ye not as the children of Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" Modern Biblical scholarship sees in this verse an expression of the universality of the fatherhood of God. Israel is no better in the eyes of God than the despised Kushites. In Rabbinic literature, on the other hand, there are several interpretations given of this interesting verse. According to one Midrash the people of Israel are not

being compared to Ethiopians but are themselves being referred to as members of the dark race. When the Israelites sin to God, says the Midrash, He calls them Ethiopians.¹ This is equivalent to saying that when the Israelites are sinful they are no better than the Ethiopians. It follows from this, however, that when Israel obeys the will of God she does stand in higher favor with Him than do the Ethiopians.

According to the second interpretation, Israel stands higher, not only than the Ethiopians, but than all other nations. The reference is made to the Ethiopians not in order to compare Israel to them but to draw the following analogy. Just as the Ethiopians are distinctive in the color of their skin, so the Israelites are distinctive in their deeds.¹

It is quite obvious from the above interpretation, as it is from numerous other Rabbinic passages, that Israel was regarded by the Rabbis as superior, from the moral and religious point of view, to the other nations. Consequently, the simple meaning of the verse, according to which Israel is placed on the same level with the Ethiopians, did not strike them with too much favor. In characteristic style, therefore, by applying the principle of *Heckesh*, they read into the words an entirely different meaning, one which was more in keeping with their national and theological convictions.

The third interpretation of the verse is likewise made in favor of Israel rather than in disparagement of her. It is quite an ingenious interpretation and is similar to the one referred to above (p.196) of verse 5.2, which involved the place of the comma. Here, too, the Rabbis punctuate

1 See above, p.164.

2 See above, p.164.

the verse differently from the usual way. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians (in your own eyes)? But unto Me (you are as) the children of Israel."¹

We have here an excellent illustration of the efforts that the Rabbis made to uplift and strengthen the morale of the people. Hounded and persecuted they came to believe that God had forsaken them and that they no longer stood in the same relationship with Him as did Israel of yore. They were now a forgotten people, dejected, and lowly, even as the Ethiopians. While they are in this depressed state, the Rabbis come and interpret Scripture for them in such a way as to raise their spirits and give them a new lease on life. It is not true, they argue, that God has forsaken you and that you no longer find favor in His eyes. You may feel as lowly and despised in your own eyes as the Ethiopians, but to God you are still as beloved as the children of Israel. In the same vein the Targum interprets the verse "Are ye not considered unto Me as beloved children?"

This concludes our analysis of exegetical interpretations of Amos in Rabbinic literature. No doubt this type of exegesis, which in a large measure is forced and artificial, will not satisfy the Western scientific mind. It is unfair, on the other hand, to judge the interpretations of Oriental scholars of many centuries ago by our own modern and Western standards. Furthermore, we must take into consideration the theological conceptions of those men and the social and political conditions under

¹ See above, p. 165.

which they lived. All of these factors indubitably had a profound influence upon their exegesis. In the main, it can be said in their favor that their motive in interpreting Scripture as they did was the moral and spiritual uplifting of Israel and the reassurance that God had not forsaken them in their hour of trial and affliction.

The next type of haggadic interpretation to be discussed is the allegorical. There are several examples of this type of exegesis in the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos. One such example is to be found in their interpretations of the verse "As if a man did flee from a lion" etc. (5.19). Modern scholars interpret the verse very simply. Just as the shepherd who escapes from the lion is met by a bear and subsequently is bitten by a serpent, so no one will be able to escape the day of judgment. Harper calls attention to "the tendency of ancient commentators to refer ^{the} to/ animals in these comparisons to particular individuals" and characterizes this tendency as "strange enough."¹ But that is precisely what the ancient Rabbis did. They allegorized the verse and made each animal represent either some nation or individual. In other words, they said that there is some hidden meaning to be deduced from the verse but they were not agreed as to what it was. According to one opinion, the lion referred to Babylonia, the bear to Media, the house to Greece, and the serpent to Edom (i.e. Rome). According to another interpretation, the lion referred to Nebuchadnezzar, the bear to Belshazzar, and the serpent to Haman. A third interpretation had it as follows: The lion refers to Laban, the bear to Esau, and the serpent to Shechem the son of Hamor.²

1 Id., p.132.

2 See above, p.123.

Another verse that the Midrash interpreted allegorically is 9.1 (I saw the Lord standing beside the altar; and He said: Smite the capitals, that the posts may shake). According to modern scholars Amos was referring to the temple which he said would be dealt such a violent blow at its capitals that it would shake to its very foundations.¹ To the Rabbis God's standing beside the altar was symbolic. It was suggestive of the fact that He was going to 'slaughter' the generation. Smite the kaftor (capitals) refers to Josiah (who was killed in battle); that the sinim (posts) may shake refers to his counsellors.

Aside from the fact that Josiah lived more than a century later, it is difficult to see why "smite the capitals" should refer to Josiah who was regarded by the Rabbis as a righteous king.² On the other hand, the Talmud does say that he was killed in battle because he did not consult with Jeremiah as to whether he should go and fight against Pharaoh-necoh, king of Egypt.³ Perhaps the Midrash means that the order to "smite the capitals" was given to Josiah since it was he who destroyed the altar at Beth-el (2K.23.15).

The final illustration of an allegorical interpretation is the one given of verse 9.13 (Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper etc.). The Midrash gives this verse a more profound meaning than do the modern scholars. According to the latter the prophet was simply promising that the future was going to bring to Israel an abundant harvest or unprecedented prosperity.⁴ According to the Midrash,

1 S.R.Driver, The Cambridge Bible, Joel and Amos, p.216.

2 Shabbath, 56b.

3 Ta'anith, 22b.

4 Driver, id.,

p.224; Cripps, id., p.274.

however, the prophet assured the people that the future was going to heal the breach between Judah and northern Israel, that there would once again be a united kingdom and that the ten tribes would be restored. The plowman refers to Judah and the reaper refers to Joseph; the treader of grapes refers to Judah and the sower of seed refers to Joseph; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine refers to the ten tribes.¹

Included among the various types of haggadic interpretation is the mystical. Mysticism was rather a strong undercurrent in Talmudic times and warnings were given against dabbling in its secrets.² Of four rabbis who entered the garden of mystical speculation, only R. Akiba emerged unscathed.³

There is not a great deal of mysticism in the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos but there is some. In verse 3.8 we read: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" The Talmud states that when one sees a lion in his dream he should upon rising immediately recite the above verse before another verse containing the word 'lion' gets ahead of him and does him harm.⁴ This was a form of incantation which was quite common in ancient days and which has survived even unto modern times. By reciting the above verse one secured the protection of the deity against any harm that a lion may cause him. Obviously, interpretations such as this are the product of the times in which they were made and have no validity whatever so far as ^{the} modern mind is concerned.

1 See above, pp. 169-70.

3 Ibid. 14b.

2 Cf. Hagigah, 13a.

4 See above, p. 85.

Another mystical interpretation which is even less comprehensible than the one above is that given to verse 5.2 (The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise). We know that Numbers, Letters, and Words played an important role in mystical speculation and one entire Midrash (Midrash Alpha Beta^{de}/R. Akiba) was devoted to a mystical interpretation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This Midrash explains why the letter "nun" is shaped as it is and then quotes from the above verse in Amos in support of the explanation.¹ The Midrash has no significance so far as shedding any light on the verse is concerned.

In verse 5.16 we read: "Therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord." Cripps refers to these words as "an impressive phrase" and quotes some one as saying that "this arrangement of the divine names is unique." He also suggests that the Septuagint and Syriac may be rendering the true text in leaving out the final word 'Lord.'² Harper amends 'Adonai' (Lord) to 'arnin,' 'I will cause shouting,'³ The Rabbis similarly recognized that we have here an unusual arrangement of the divine names and this afforded them the opportunity to engage in mystical speculation." Thus R. Berakya said that from "the God of hosts, the Lord" we can derive that 'hosts' is one of the names of the Lord. To this R. Judah added that not necessarily His full name but even a single letter of His name can make a 'host' just as effectively as His full name.⁴ We have here a concept

1 See above, pp. 107-8.

2 Id., p. 191.

3 Id., p. 236.

* The divine names were a particularly fertile field for mystical speculation.

4 See above, pp. 119-20.

which strongly resembles that of Philo's Logos. The name of God is conceived of as having a separate existence from God Himself. Furthermore, His name is as powerful as He is Himself. "I am the Lord, that is My name" (Isa.43.8). The same Midrash interprets this verse as follows: Just as I create and destroy worlds, so My name creates and destroys worlds. It will readily be seen that the mystical interpretations do not help us to understand the text of Amos. If anything, they tend to make the text more obscure.

There are a considerable number of verses in Amos to which the Rabbis gave a Messianic or eschatological interpretation. These form a part of the haggadic interpretations of Amos. The Talmud states that the words "And I caused it to rain upon one city" etc. (4.7) will be fulfilled during the first year of the seven year period preceding the coming of the son of David (i.e. the Messiah).¹ Unlike the modern scholars, the Rabbis place the oracle in the future, the 'waw' in we'himtarti converting the perfect into the imperfect. (I shall cause it to rain). From the context, however, it appears clear that ~~Amos~~ Amos is referring to it as something that has already taken place.

In 4.13 we read: "And declareth unto man what is his thought." In a number of Rabbinic sources the Rabbis interpret these words to mean that God keeps a record of all idle conversation which has been spoken by an individual and that eventually it is all read to him and he is held accountable for it. According to one opinion this is read to him immediately before his death.² It is on the day of judgment, however, that he will

1 See above, p. 96.

2 See above, pp. 102-3.

be reproved for it.¹ The context deals with the future and may be said to apply to the day of judgment.

The Midrash interprets the words "It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph" (5.15) as referring not to the immediate future but to the days of the Messiah.² God said that just as Israel was redeemed in this world because of the merit of Joseph, so they will be redeemed in the Messianic future because of the merit of Joseph. From the context, however, it appears that Amos is speaking of the immediate rather than of the Messianic future.

In verse 7.8 the prophet says in the name of God, "I will not again pardon them any more." We have seen above (p.141) that the Midrash which comments on this verse may be interpreted in more than one way. Whatever the interpretation be, however, it is clear that according to the Midrash the reference is to the Messianic future and not to the prophet's own generation. But here, too, the context seems to point to the contemporary scene rather than to the distant future.

In chapter VIII, verses 11 and 12 are interpreted as Messianic passages ("Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land" etc.). The famine that Amos refers to is one of ten historical famines. All the others have already taken place but the one that Amos refers to will take place in the Messianic future (i.e. shortly before the coming of the Messiah).³ "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord" (v.12). According to one interpretation

1 See above, p.103.

2 See above, p.119.

3 See above, p.153.

this means that they shall seek to find out when the Messiah is coming.¹ Rashi, the celebrated commentator of the Talmud, confesses that he does not know how this is derived. It is evident that in these verses Amos is referring to the future. There is no way, however, of determining absolutely whether he has reference to the near or distant future.

The Midrash states that the judgment contained in the words "All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword" (9.10) refers to "the latter generations" (i.e. shortly before the advent of the Messiah).² From the context, however, it seems apparent that Amos is addressing himself to the sinners of his own generation.

Finally, the Rabbis regard the entire epilogue (vs.11-15) as being eschatological. Unlike most of the modern scholars, they accepted the epilogue as authentic and not as an interpolation from exilic or post-exilic times. The fact that throughout his book, Amos speaks of doom and judgment, and in the epilogue, of restoration and a bright future, did not create a literary problem for the Rabbis. On the contrary, that was to them characteristic of all the prophets who as we have seen above (p.51) followed the example of Moses by inaugurating their prophetic utterances with ~~the~~ words of reproach and closing them with words of comfort.

This concludes our examination of Messianic and eschatological interpretations of Amos in the Rabbinic literature. It is clear from these interpretations that according to the Rabbinic point of view Amos was not always speaking of events (whether they be related to judgment or restora-

1 See above, p.152.

2 See above, p.167.

tion) that were to take place within the lifetime of his own listeners but also of events that were not to take place unto "the end of days" or the days of the Messiah. This is in line with what we said earlier in this chapter, (p.18) namely, that from the Rabbinic point of view, the prophets were not merely concerned with the moral and spiritual well-being of the people of their own generation but with the destiny of the Jewish people as a whole, from the beginning to the end of time.

The next group of interpretations to be discussed is what we have termed as philological. This will include interpretations that deal with the etymology of words, with grammar, syntax and other forms of linguistic science. It is in this group of interpretations, perhaps, that the Rabbis have made their greatest contribution to the understanding of the text of Amos. We shall also include in this group interpretations that involve paronomasia, or punning, though, strictly speaking, they belong under rhetoric rather than philology.

The word rahamow in verse 1.11 is generally translated his compassion, from raham, to love or have compassion. The Rabbis, on the other hand, translate it his womb, from rehem, womb.¹ It is interesting to note that Cyril of Alexandria (444 A.D.) rendered the phrase "did violence to the womb."² There is no etymological difference between raham, to have compassion and rehem, womb. The Rabbis, obviously, did not mean it literally that before Esau saw the light of day, he destroyed his womb (i.e. the womb which contained him), as he attempted to kill his mother. It was

1 See above, p. 59.

2 I.C.C., Amos and Hosea, p.33.

a graphic way of expressing the idea that Esau was a congenital murderer.

In verse 2.2 ammenoth ha-kerioth is usually rendered the palaces of Kerieth, referring to a city of Moab. That there was a city in Moab by that name we know from Jer. 48.34 and from line 13 of the Moabite Stone.¹ Ewald identifies Kerieth with Ar, the capital city of Moab, mentioned in Num. 21.13.² The Targum, however, translates it the palaces of the city (or cities), from kizya, city or town. It is possible that the Targum is correct because if the reference were to the city of Kerieth the article 'ha' should have been omitted.³

In 3.6 na'alayim is translated shoes (or a pair of shoes). The various Midrashim that quote the verse also use na'alayim in the sense of shoes, from na'al, shoe. The Targum, however, interprets the word as a derivation of na-ai, to bolt, close, or lock. According to the Targum the judge dispossesses the poor man by closing in his field between two of his own fields.⁴ The Targum's rendering of the word is forced. He employs it as a predicate though it is clearly a noun. Kimhi suggests that the Targum derives the word from ne'ilah, a word used in Rabbinic literature for locking or closing.

In verses 2.7 and 8.4 ha-aho'efim is usually rendered that pant after, from sha'af, to pant, breathe hard. Some modern scholars think that the MT should be emended to read ha-ahafim, from shuf, to bridge or

1 Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, Kerieth.

2 I.C.C. Amos and Hosea, p.41.

3 In Jer. 48.41, where the article 'ha' is also employed, most Jewish commentators render ha-kerioth, the cities, not Kerieth.

4 See above, pp.62-63.

crush as in Gen. 3.15. This is supported by the Greek, Syriac, and Vulgate versions.¹ The Targum renders it de'shaitin, who despise. This is also different from the MT. The Midrash in quoting verse 8.4 states that sho'afim has the same meaning as dahak, to press or oppress. Harper suggests that the Targum may have had the reading ha-shatim, from shut, to despise.² That is not likely, however, for in the Midrash the reading is the same as in the MT. It seems clear that the Midrash interprets the word as a derivation of sha-af, to pant or be eager, i.e., they are eager to take advantage of the poor; hence, who oppress the poor.

There has been much speculation by Biblical scholars in regard to the meaning of u-bidmeshek eres in verse 3.12. Does demeshek refer to Damascus or has it some other meaning? Many modern scholars, including Wellhausen³ and Driver,⁴ believe that our text is corrupt. The MT appears to be demeshek, though some manuscripts read damesek.⁵ It is interesting to note that in the first edition of the entire Bible (Soncino, 1488) and in some of the other early editions, including the edition of "The Latter Prophets" printed in Pesaro in 1515, the reading is damesek, which is the usual rendering for Damascus. The reading in the Targum is also damesek. According to the Targum the prophet complained that the people were laying their trust on, or resting their case with, Damascus. This interpretation of the Targum is suggested by the word eres, couch. Both Rashi and Kimpi follow the Targum. The

1 Cf. Harper, id., p.48; Gripe, id., pp.140-141.

2 Cf. Ezek. 16.57; 28.24,26.

3 Harper, id., p.80.

4 Id., p.161.

5 Ginsburg, Biblia Hebraica, p.1065; Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, vol.II, p.853.

Septuagint also renders it Damascus. The probability, therefore, is that Amos was referring to the city of Damascus, though nowhere else in the O.T. does the word appear in this form.

The word ginoth in verse 4.2 is generally translated hooks, from gina, hook or thorn. The Targum, however, renders it trais'hun, their shields, from the same word zina which also means shields, as in ISam.17.7; Ps.91.4 and elsewhere. Jewish commentators are divided in their interpretation of it. Rashi and Kimhi follow the Targum while Ibn Ezra translates it thorns. Those who translate it shields point out that the prophet did not mean shields literally but boats that have the form of a shield. This answers the objection raised by Harper that shields "gives no sense here."¹

The word siroth, in the same verse as above, creates a problem similar to that of ginoth. The usual translation of siroth in our verse is hooks, from sir, hook or thorn. Both the Talmud and the Targum however, render siroth, boats. The Jewish commentators agree that siroth is derived from sir but that it is used in the sense of pot as in sir ha-basar, the flesh-pots (Exod.16.3). They explain that what the prophet referred to were little fisher-boats that resembled pots. Rashi points out that these little fisher-boats are very light and glide quickly across the water, thus suggesting that the people of Israel will be carried away into captivity in great haste.

It must be conceded that to translate ginoth and siroth as hooks is more direct and less forced than to translate the one shields and say

1 Id., p.87.

that the reference is to boats that resemble shields, and the other boats and say that they are referred to as siroth because they resemble pots.

The word me'hamez in verse 4.5 is generally translated of that which is leavened. The Palestinian Talmud which quotes the verse also uses the word in the sense of leaven.¹ The Targum, however, translates hamez, oppression or violence, as in ashru hamoz, relieve the oppressed (Isa.1.17). We find also that in Ps.71.4 homez is used in the sense of an oppressor or ruthless man. The etymology of the two words is the same. The root meaning is to be sharp, pungent; hence, oppression or violence.

The meaning of the Targum would thus be "and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving from that which is gained by violence."

The word nikyon in verse 4.6 is generally translated cleanness, from naka, to be clean. The Targum, however, renders it as though the text read ki'heyon, bluntness from kaha, to be blunted. The other versions have the same reading as the Targum. It does not follow from this, however, that the Targum had a different reading from the MT. It may well be that the Targum interpreted it as bluntness of teeth rather than cleanness of teeth because the former is a more familiar expression in Scripture than the latter.² In fact, the latter has no parallel in the Old Testament.

In verse 4.12 hikon is translated prepare, from kun, to prepare. In order to clarify what form the preparation is to take, R.Simon interprets it hithkewyan, apply the mind.³ Here, too, there is no etymological difference. It is a Talmudic or Aramaic word of the same etymology, used

1 See above, p. 94.

2 Cf. Jer.31.29,30; Ezek.18.2.

3 See above, p.98.

in the sense of applying the mind or directing the heart, as in 1 Sam. 7.3: "And direct your heart unto the Lord." In Rabbinic literature the word is commonly used as a noun, kavanah, devotion, intention, concentration of mind.¹

In verse 4.13 se'ho is usually translated his thought, from the word si'ah, meditation, as in 1 K.18.27 "Either he is musing (si'ah lo) etc. In Rabbinic literature it is interpreted as his speech or conversation, as in II K.9.11 "Ye know the man and what his talk (si'ho) was."² The etymology of the two renderings is the same. The Targum, however, translates it his works. Both Rashi and Kimhi follow the Targum. That is not an exact translation of se'ho, though meditation, speech and works are all closely related.

The word kimah in verse 5.8 is rendered Pleiades and is one of the heavenly constellations. In a play on words, R.Samuel says that this constellation is called kimah because it consists of approximately a hundred (ke-me'ah) stars.³

In verse 5.17 the word e'ebor is usually translated I will pass through, from abar, to pass over. The Mekilta, however, states that it is a derivation of ebrah, wrath or indignation, as in Zeph. 1.15 "That day is a day of wrath (ebrah)."⁴ According to the Mekilta, therefore, the verse should be rendered "For I will pour out my wrath in the midst of thee." The dif-

1 Cf. Erubin, 95b; Pesachim, 114b and elsewhere.

2 See above, p. 104.

3 See above, p. 111

* R.Samuel is referred to in the Talmud as a great astronomer. He said of himself that he was as familiar with the paths of heaven as with the streets of his home town, Nehardea. Cf. Berakoth, 58b.

4 See above, p. 121.

ficuity with this rendering is that nowhere in the O.T. do we find abar used in the Kal in the sense of to be wroth, though there are several instances where it is used in that sense in the Hithpael, e.g., "Therefore the Lord heard, and was wroth" (wa-yithabar).¹

The word u-seruhim in verse 6.4 is generally translated and stretch themselves out, from sarah, to spread or stretch out. In Rabbinic literature the word is employed in several other senses, such as to spoil, to sin, to lacerate, and to smell badly. It is in the last sense that the Rabbis interpret seruhim in our present verse. According to their interpretation the verse should read: "That lie upon beds of ivory and cause their couches to smell badly" etc.² The objection to this interpretation is that the Rabbis give to the word a new meaning which so far as we know, it never had in Old Testament days.

In one of the Rabbinic comments on the words "That drink wine in bowls" (6.6) we have a good illustration of the way the Rabbis at times engaged in paronomasia or punning. The word used for bowl is mizrak which is a derivation of zarak, to sprinkle. But zarak also means to throw, as in Exod. 9.10 "And Moses threw it up (va-yizrok) heavenward." Hence, in a play on the word mizrak, the Rabbis say that the people in the days of Amos would throw their cups to one another in sport.³

Most modern scholars believe that the word metha'eb in verse 6.8 should read with the letter A-yin instead of A-lef, so that it may be translated abhor. The Targum also translates it as though it reads with an A-yin. That does not mean, however, that the Targum had a different

1 Ps. 78.21. Cf. also Ps. 78.59,62; 89.39; Prov.26.17.

2 See above, p.129.

3 See above, p.31.

reading from the MT. It means, rather, that according to the Targum metha'eb with an A-lef means exactly the same as with an A-yin. There are other examples of words that have the identical meaning whether they are read with A-lef or A-yin, e.g. pe'tha and pith'om, suddenly, (Num.6.9; Isa. 29.5), ga'al (Mal.1.7) and ga'al (Lev.26.15), to loathe.

Another example of punning may be found in the Rabbinic comment on verse 7.7: "Behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand. The word used for plumbline is anak. In Rabbinic language the word for wronging or oppressing is o'na-a. Thus in a play on this unusual word, anak, which is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament, the Rabbis declare that all the gates are sometimes closed except the gates (of prayer) of those who are wronged (o'na-a) by men.¹

In verse 8.3 shiroth is usually translated songs, from shir, song. There is a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether Amos was referring to the secular songs that were sung in the palace or the hymns that were sung in the temple. The word hekal, which follows the word shiroth, may be rendered either palace or temple. The Midrash gives shir its other meaning which is hymn or sacred song, as in Ps. 33.3 "Sing unto Him a new song." According to the Midrash, therefore, the prophet was referring to the sacred songs that were sung in the temple.² This seems more likely than that he was referring to songs sung in the palace.

1 See above, p. 140.

2 See above, p. 148.

In verse 8.5 the usual translation of ya'abor is will pass, from abar, to pass. The Targum, however, renders the verse as though it were a derivation of ibur which in Rabbinic literature may mean grain, pregnancy, embryo, outskirts (of a town), and intercalation. It is the last meaning mentioned that the Targum gives to ya'abor. It will be recalled that in the Jewish calendar, the months of which are lunar, an additional month is intercalated every leap year. This is done seven times in nineteen years in order to harmonize the lunar and solar years. Thus according to the interpretation of the Targum the people were asking when the additional month was going to be intercalated because that would cause the price of grain to rise.¹ The difficulty with this interpretation, aside from the fact that the word is never used in the O.T. in the sense of intercalation, is that even in Rabbinic literature when used in this sense, is never used in the Kal. If the verse refers to the intercalation of an extra month, instead of ya'abor it should read yithaber.

In verse 9.1 u-beza'am is generally translated and break them in pieces from baza, to cut in pieces. According to Harper the word "is so difficult that Wellhausen and Nowack give it up."² Many scholars follow the Greek version which with a slight change in vocalization, renders it in the imperative, u-beza'ame, and break them into pieces. A similar rendering is given by Ibn Ezra and Kimhi. The former points out that the word is akin to paza, to cut or wound, as in 1 K.20.37 "Smiting and wounding

1 See above, p. 148.

2 Id., p.188.

(u-bege'a) him." In the Midrash, however, the word is interpreted to mean their robbery or unjust gain, from bege, plunder or unjust gain, as in Exod. 18,21 "Hating unjust gain" (bege).¹ One may well raise the objection that this interpretation does not accord with the context.

This concludes our analysis of philological interpretations of Amos in Rabbinic literature. Whilst these interpretations may not always be grammatically or etymologically accurate, they are none the less suggestive, and at times even shed some light on passages that are otherwise obscure and unintelligible. A distinct contribution that many of these interpretations make is to call attention to the fact that, as in other languages so in Hebrew, many words may have more than one meaning, though the etymology may be the same.

This brings us to the final group of Rabbinic interpretations to which we have referred above as proof texts. In such interpretations the Rabbinic literature literally abounds. Reference has already been made more than once to the fact that the Rabbis always endeavored to give Biblical 'support' to any statement that they made. This practice was based on the presumption that all truths were contained in the Torah. Practically no statement, therefore, of any significance, whether it was halakic or haggadic, was ever made without the accompaniment of the familiar formula, "as it is said" or "for it is written."

The proof texts may be classified into the following two groups:

- 1) Those which bring Biblical 'support' to Halakoth, principles, or opinions that had been current for some time, and 2) those from which

¹ See above, p. 157.

new laws, principles, or opinions are derived. As was mentioned above (p.21), it is not always easy to determine whether the Midrash preceded the Halakah, principle, or opinion, or whether these preceded the Midrash. There is nothing to be gained by listing all the proof texts in the Book of Amos. We shall therefore merely cite one or two of each group by way of illustration.

R.Yose says: If a person sins once, twice, or three times, God will forgive him, but when he sins a fourth time, He will not forgive him any more, as it is said, "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not reverse it" (2.6).¹ It seems clear that here the Midrash preceded the opinion which R.Yose expresses. No such opinion was probably held prior to the interpretation of the verse.

R.Judah said in the name of R.Johanan: The Shekinah made ten journeysFrom the court to the altar, for it is written, "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar" (9.1). . . .From the roof to the wall, for it is written, "And, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumbline" (7.7).² Here, too, it appears that the Midrash preceded the opinion which is expressed by R.Judah.

A mourner is forbidden to do any work, for it is written, "And I will turn your feasts into mourning" (8.10). Just as it is forbidden to do any work on the festival, so it is forbidden for a mourner to do any work.³

1 See above, p.63.

2 See above, pp.139-40.

3 See above, p.151.

It seems quite apparent that here the Halakah preceded the Midrash. It had long been a custom that the mourner abstains from work. Proof was invoked in order to give the custom Scriptural authority.

These illustrations could be multiplied almost endlessly. There is no need, however, to cite any more examples. We see from the above illustrations that frequently a Scriptural verse is quoted by the Rabbis, not for the purpose of interpreting it, but either, to derive some law or principle from it, or else to give Biblical 'support' to a law or principle that was already established.

We have now concluded our analysis of the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos. It is clear from this analysis that these interpretations can hardly be termed a commentary on the Book of Amos in the ordinary sense of the word. What we have here instead of a commentary is a great variety of isolated Rabbinic passages which are found in the Talmuds and Midrashim, in which reference is made to the various verses in Amos. We have already observed that more than one third of the verses in Amos are not even once quoted or referred to in Rabbinic literature. There are some verses in Amos, on the other hand, that are given a variety of interpretations and that are quoted fifteen or twenty times. We have seen that some verses are quoted for the purpose of explaining its simple meaning. That is especially true of the philological interpretations. Generally speaking, however, the simple meaning is taken for granted and the verse is quoted in order to give it some hidden meaning or 'midrashic' interpretation. It is here that the Rabbis afford us the opportunity of being most critical of their interpretations. It is here also that their interpretations differ

so radically from those of modern Biblical scholars. But, as was already suggested above, we must not judge the interpretations of the Rabbis by our own standards of exegesis. We must also take into consideration the Rabbinic attitude toward Scripture, the Rabbinic conception of prophecy and the historical circumstances under which the interpretations were made. It should be borne in mind, furthermore, that the haggadic interpretations were never made with a sense of authority and finality, as was the case with the Halakah. As George Foote Moore expressed it, "There was no such thing. . . .as an orthodox Haggadah."¹ The chief concern of the Rabbis was to improve the people of Israel morally and religiously, to exhort them to do penance and return to the teachings of Scripture, to strengthen their faith in God and in the future of Israel, to offer them hope and comfort in time of great stress and to assure them that a day of reckoning is coming when all the wicked including their persecutors will be brought to judgment. These exhortations and messages of comfort were all based on the words of Scripture.

It may be said in conclusion that the Rabbinic interpretations served to widen the scope of Amos's prophetic utterances. From their point of view Amos's words of judgment were not limited in their application to the people of his own generation but included also individuals and nations of past and future generations. The Rabbinic interpretations also enriched and deepened the ethical and spiritual message of Amos by adding to it a host of homilies, legends, and parables. As a result of the Rabbinic interpretations Amos looms not merely as a prophet of his own generation, with a message for the people of his own day, but rather as a prophet who transcends time and who promulgates a message to the world that has no

1 Judaism, vol.1,p.162.

limitations of either time or space.

Summary

The Rabbinic interpretations of Amos are based upon the Oral Law of Judaism. Side by side ^{with} the Written Law had always gone an unwritten tradition which served both to interpret Scripture and supplement it. From the critical point of view the authority of the unwritten law was common consent or long established and uninterrupted usage. From the traditional Jewish point of view the unwritten law formed an integral part of the divine revelation and consequently possessed the same degree of authority as the Written Law. The interpretations and deductions of the Rabbinic scholars were believed to be implicit in the words of Scripture.

When the belief in an Oral Law was first held is unknown. From the traditional point of view this belief goes back to the very days of Moses. Isaac Hirsch Weiss points out, however, that the earlier generations never made such a claim. Not a single one of the prophets, for example, makes any reference to the existence of an Oral Law. From the nature of the Written Law, however, it seems apparent that there must have been an Oral Law to interpret and supplement the Written Law, which is usually presented very briefly and at times even unintelligibly.

The Oral Law, broadly speaking, includes the works of the prophets and the Hagiographa, the entire literature of the Talmuds and Midrashim, as well as the Aramaic translations of the Bible, known as Targums. The prophets were among the first to transmit the Oral Law to succeeding generations. Following the prophets, the interpretation and development of the Written Law was carried on by the Men of the Great Assembly or the Scribes who are believed by some scholars to have been identical with them.

Following them came the Zuroth or Pairs of scholars who in turn were succeeded by the Tannaim and Amoraim.

The results of the work of the Tannaim in expounding the Written Law and in enacting new statutes to meet the demands of the times, are contained in a work which was compiled and codified by R. Judah the Patriarch, and is known as the Mishnah. Many oral traditions or Halakoth which were not included in the Mishnah were later compiled in a separate collection known as Tosefta (additions). Hundreds of additional Halakoth which are not contained in any separate collection but which are to be found scattered throughout the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, are referred to in the Talmud as Baraithoth (external).

There are two distinct currents running through the stream of Rabbinic literature: 1) Halakah (legal matter), and 2) Haggadah (non-legal matter). This is especially true of the Gemara which expounds the Mishnah. The Gemara is the collection of the interpretations of the Mishnah by the Amoraim. The Mishnah and the Gemara together constitute the Talmud.

The Halakah deals with abstruse legal discussions and is characterized by dialectical subtilities and hair-splitting argumentation. The Haggadah, on the other hand, is written in a much lighter vein and includes many anecdotes, parables, legends, and fables. The material contained in the Haggadah has always been a source of great comfort and hope to the Jewish people in their darkest moments of suffering and despair.

In addition to the literature of the Talmud, there is another vast body of literature which is an integral part of the Oral Law and which is known as Midrash. Meaning 'to search' or 'expound,' Midrash refers to the

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searching and expounding of Scripture around which the entire spiritual activity of the Jews had centered since the days of Ezra. The process of searching the Scriptures with a view to finding out its inner meaning was greatly intensified after the collapse of the Jewish State.

There are two kinds of Midrash: 1) Midrash Halakah and 2) Midrash Haggadah. The 'tannaitic' Midrashim are mainly halakic. The chief purpose of the ^{halakic} Midrash was 1) to deduce new Halakoth from the Written Law, and 2) to find Biblical authority for the old Halakoth.

A third branch of Rabbinic literature which forms a part of the Oral Law is the Targumim or Aramaic versions of the Bible. These are known as 1) Targum Onkelos, 2) the Jerusalem Targum or pseudo-Jonathan, and 3) the fragmentary Jerusalem Targum. The Talmud states that the Targum to the Prophets was composed by Jonathan ben Uzziel (1st century) "from the mouths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," thus implying that it was based on traditions which were handed down by these prophets.

Whilst it is true that the Rabbinic interpretations of biblical verses frequently deviate from their plain and literal meaning, they nevertheless were not made arbitrarily but according to well-defined and generally accepted hermeneutic principles. The origin of these principles is unknown. In the Responsa literature of the Gaonim (7th-11th centuries), they are declared to be Halakah le-Moshe mi-Sinai (revealed to Moses at Sinai).

The two principal methods that the Rabbis employed in their interpretations of Scripture are 1) Peshat and 2) Derash. By Peshat is meant the plain meaning of the Biblical verse, while Derash is a more artificial

way of interpreting a passage. Hillel was the first one to compile a definite list of hermeneutic principles. His seven rules of exegesis were later expanded by R. Ishmael into thirteen. The thirteen rules of the latter were generally adopted as the authoritative rules of Rabbinic interpretation. Subsequently, these were further expanded by R. Eliezer ben R. Jose to thirty-two. Most of his rules, however, apply only to the Haggadah and not to the Halakah.

The meager account that Amos gives in his book of his personal life is somewhat supplemented by the Rabbis in the Haggadah. They tell us that he was called Amos because he was a stammerer. According to them he was not a poor shepherd but owned the flocks that he tended and the sycamore trees that he pruned. In spite of his wealth, however, he chose to live a life of hardship and afflicted his soul so that Israel's sins may be expiated. He was apparently held in high esteem by the Rabbis for they ascribed to him a position in the council of the Messiah. According to tradition Amos was killed by Uzziah, king of Judah, who struck him on his forehead with a glowing iron.

In the opinion of the Rabbis the prophecies of Amos were not reduced to writing by the prophet himself but at a much later date by the Men of the Great Assembly. The Rabbis acknowledged that the prophecies of Amos were intensely severe. They indicated, however, that there was also a softer side to Amos's nature and that he did not wish to see Israel destroyed.

One should not expect to find any unity in the Rabbinic interpretations of Amos. In most instances there is no connecting link between the

interpretations of one verse and those of the following verse. Each interpretation is a unit in itself and need not bear any relationship to other interpretations.

The Rabbinic interpretations of Amos fall into the following classifications: 1) halakic, 2) haggadic, 3) philological, and 4) proof texts. The haggadic interpretations may be subdivided into the following groups: 1) historical, 2) homiletical, 3) exegetical, 4) mystical, and 5) messianic and eschatological. To those who are unfamiliar with the Rabbinic principles of exegesis the halakic deductions will appear forced and farfetched. After one has carefully studied these principles, however, the conclusions that the Rabbis draw seem more inherent in the text. As for the haggadic interpretations of Amos, unless we have a comprehensive understanding of the true nature of the Haggadah, these interpretations will appear to us strange, ludicrous, and fantastic. Above all, we must not make the mistake of judging a literature that was produced in the Orient many centuries ago by our modern and Western standards. We must realize that it was characteristic of the ancients in the Orient to indulge in hyperbole and to recount tales that are most incredible and fantastic.

The grave danger in reading the Haggadah lies in that we are apt to accept literally what was intended to be interpreted metaphorically or allegorically. Much of what is contained in the Haggadah was never meant to be taken seriously.

It should be realized, furthermore, that the Rabbis frequently expounded Scripture for purposes of edification, consolation, and exhortation. Any moral or religious truth was corroborated by 'searching out' the Scriptures. To achieve this end the plain meaning was not always

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adequate. Consequently, the plain meaning or Peshat was supplemented by three other methods of exegesis: Derash (homiletical interpretation), Remez (allegorical explanation) and Sod (esoteric teaching). However, because the Rabbis resorted to other methods of exegesis, it does not follow that they therefore abandoned Peshat or the literal meaning of a verse. In fact, the rule was laid down by the Rabbis that "the plain meaning of a verse must never be lost sight of." The Rabbis maintained, however, that besides the plain meaning which is apparent, there are hidden meanings which are inherent in the text and which could be deduced therefrom by applying the principles of hermeneutics.

There are examples of the Rabbis interpreting a verse in such a way as not only to give it a forced and artificial meaning but a meaning that is exactly opposite from what was apparently intended by the prophet. It should be added, however, that their motive in doing so was generally wholesome and benevolent. The Rabbis found it necessary, for example, to read into the words of Scripture messages of hope and comfort to a people whose outlook on life had, as a result of many years ^{of} suffering and persecution, become extremely dark and dismal. Hounded and tormented the people of Israel came to believe that God had forsaken them. By interpreting Scripture in their own unique way, the Rabbis helped to raise their spirits and give them a new lease on life.

The philological interpretations of Amos, while possibly not always grammatically or etymologically accurate, are nevertheless quite suggestive. They call attention to the fact that, as in other languages so in Hebrew, many words may have more than one meaning, though the etymology be the same.

The fourth group of interpretations we have designated as proof texts. The Rabbis constantly quoted from Scripture in order to give Biblical 'support' to their opinions, be they halakic or haggadic. This practice was based on the presumption that all truths are contained in Scripture.

All in all the Rabbinic interpretations served to widen the scope of the prophetic utterances of Amos. His oracles, according to the Rabbis, were not limited to the people of his own generation but applied also to past and future generations. The Rabbinic interpretations helped to enrich and deepen the ethical and spiritual message of Amos by adding to it many homilies, legends, and parables. As a result of the Rabbinic interpretations Amos looms not merely as a prophet of his own generation, with ~~whom~~ a message for the people of his own day, but rather as a prophet who belongs to eternity, and whose message applies to all generations from the beginning to the end of time.

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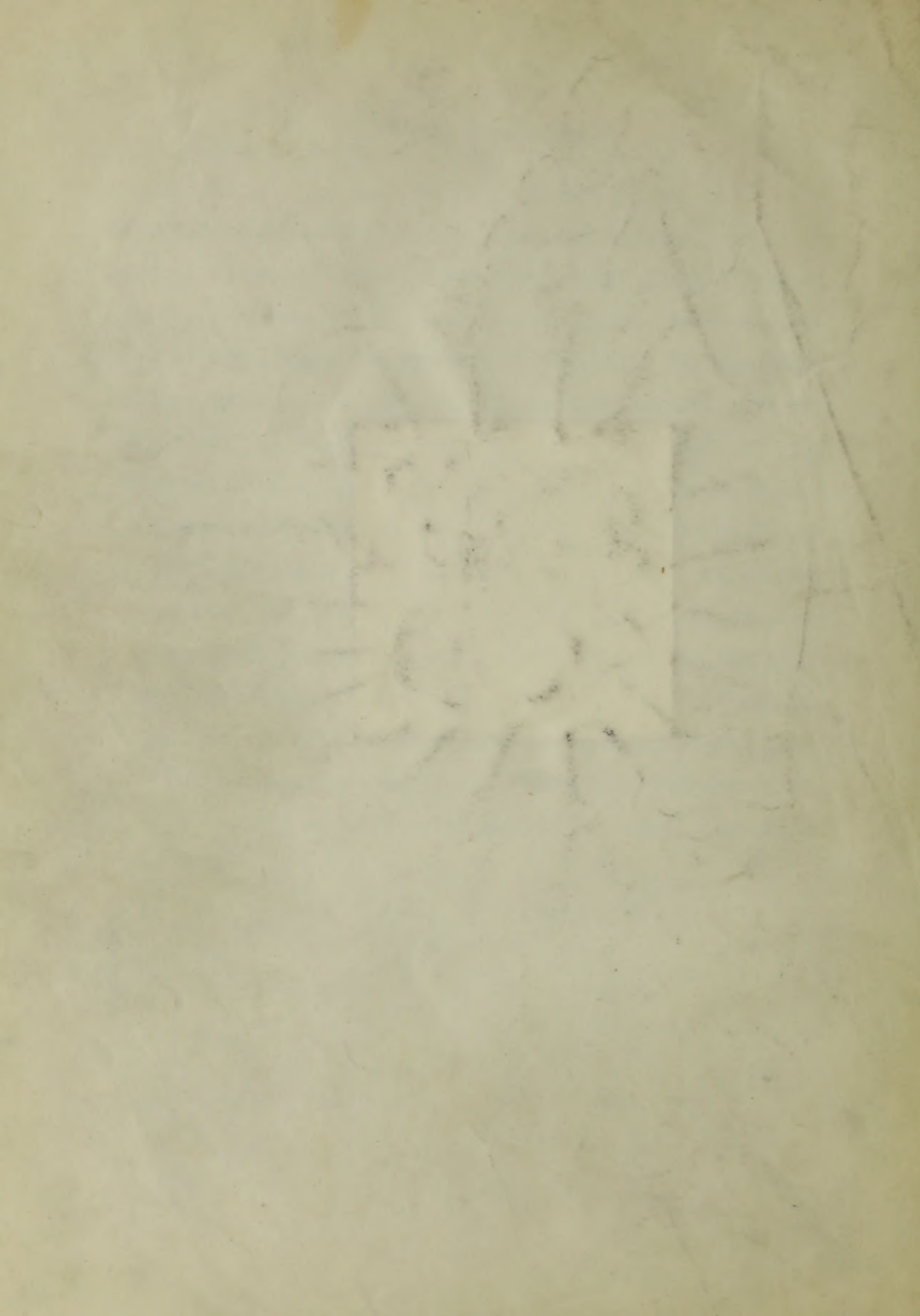
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